U.S Coast Guard Auxiliary

U-Directorate – IT User Support & Services

WOW Platform Workbook

WOW II Website Analysis of:	DDD-dd-ff
<u>Initial Site Approval</u>:	Yes |No
CS Staff Officer:	
CS Staff Officer phone:	
CS Staff Officer email:	
Flotilla Commander:	
Flotilla Commander Phone:	
Flotilla Commander email:	
Website Analyst:	
Directorate:	U-Directorate – IT User Support & Services
Website Analyst Phone:	
Date Analysis Sent:	
Date Website Approved:	

This workbook details the requirements and best practices for Auxiliary WOW websites. Please make corrections to the items noted in **Red** below and let me know and we'll be happy to work with you to achieve National approval for your unit website. Items in **Green** have met the requirement. Comments, suggestions or recommendations will be included with all pages noted in **Red**. Any such corrections are identified in detail on the following pages.

If you have questions or would like assistance, please get in touch by phone or email.

Thank you for your help in updating your website.

Example of two webpages that were reviewed:

Webpage	Correction Needed
Fed Boater Safety	U.S. Aids to Navigation System cover page image is missing an Alt Tag. To correct this, left click on the image to select it, then right click on the image and select the Properties option from the list. Then, enter a concise descriptive message in the "Alternative Text" field. Then click on the OK button to save your entry.
Social Media	Refer to the SOP on the use and requirements for Social Media within the flotilla, division and district organizational levels.

Requirements (Must be met)

1. Use canonical unit numbers (e.g., 1-5, 7-3, 12-13, 3-15) to describe your flotilla. For example: Division 3 or Flotilla 3-15. [revised 1/2023]

Webpage	Correction Needed
Homepage	The site meets this requirement.

2. When using photographs or graphic images, include an "alt tag" (i.e., alternative text) identification with each image. The use of alt tags is a federal requirement for the visually impaired, telling them what the image is or describing what is occurring in the photo. Crop and scale your photographs to their final size BEFORE uploading them to WOW.

   NOTE: Maximum image file size must be less than or equal to 300KB.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

3. Check that your website displays correctly and consistently using: Apple Safari, Chrome, Firefox, and Microsoft Edge.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

4. The site shall not contain any commercial advertisements, nor appear to endorse any commercial product. Sites must not contain inappropriate information, including specific advice, endorsement or approval of a product or service, or sponsorship information.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

5. The site shall present a professional web appearance and must not bring discredit or embarrassment to the Coast Guard or the Auxiliary.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

6. Make sure your site does not include materials that infringe on the rights or privacy of an individual or violate copyright restrictions. Note: Auxiliary websites are not copyrightable.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

7. USCG Auxiliary Logo & Unit Identifier Area: Make sure your site does not display the "official" Auxiliary or Coast Guard Seal or display the emblem or logo of another unit as your own. The Coast Guard Auxiliary Standard Emblem is OK. See examples below:

U.S. Coast Guard Seal	U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Seal	U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Emblem
PROHIBITED	**PROHIBITED**	**ALLOWED**

NOTE: For usage guidance see page 5-45 in the Auxiliary Manual COMDTINST M16790 (series)

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

8. Make sure there is contact information for your unit on your website. See "About <unit name>" menu option to determine who and what is listed. Either a generic email address or the use of the opt-in check boxes in the "Auxofficer" application is suggested.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

9. The site shall not contain any blank pages or under construction notices, and all links must be live (i.e., no dead links).

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

10. The site may not play auto-start music or video, nor display animated GIFs. Rotating (carousel) slide shows (without audio) are acceptable.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

11. All persons who have personal email addresses or phone numbers posted on any non-protected portion of the website must have given you written or email permission to post their information or they have opted in at AuxDirectory/AuxOfficer.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

12. Any external links must support Auxiliary objectives. Make sure they are in good taste, and do not bring discredit to the Auxiliary.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

13. Make sure your site limits access to sensitive information by putting such information on protected pages following OPSEC guidelines. Consider using role-based protection, or Members Only page and sub-pages.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

14. Check and make sure that your site does not violate Operational Security (OPSEC) guidelines, which are the same for protected as well as non-protected webpages. See: Common OPSEC Indicators.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

15. Make sure your links to onsite material are permalinks, a URL that is intended to remain unchanged for many years into the future, yielding a hyperlink that is less susceptible to link rot (i.e., "a7029.pdf" instead of "a7029H-Rev2.pdf").

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

16. Make sure you have parental permission for any pictures of minors displayed on the site, along with a signed copy of the CGAux Parental Release form.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

17. Your site may provide links to the national Forms Warehouse, or to individual forms hosted on the Forms Warehouse, but may not be a copy of any national form or manual posted on your site. You may not post any locally developed forms meant for gathering data for AUXDATA entry. In general, you should always link to the website that is the source of the form or document.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

18. Adobe Flash may not be used in any Auxiliary website (WOW, AIRS, or private domain). This is due to multiple cyber-security issues owning that Adobe is no longer supporting this utility.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

19.   Any ribbon-checker or link to a third party ribbon-checker is prohibited.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

20.   Links and external references MUST use the HTTPS transport protocol in the URL. This includes images, documents, and both internal and external page references.

Webpage	Correction Needed
All	The site meets this requirement.

Best Practices (Should be met)

1. **Embedded spaces in links** – Make sure none of your links to on-site materials contain embedded spaces. See the examples below:

Readability & Security	Embedded	Example
Poor	Spaces	Nautical Chart Updating Guide.pdf (Translates into this: Nautical%20Chart%20Updating%20Guide.pdf)
Good	Hyphens	Nautical-Chart-Updating-Guide.pdf
	Underlines	Nautical_Chart_Updating_Guide.pdf (Google reads this as: NauticalChartUpdatingGuide.pdf

   Avoid using the following reserved characters in a file name:
   / : * ? " < > | [ ] & $

   See also: National Archives, "Best Practices for File Naming", https://records-express.blogs.archives.gov/2017/08/22/best-practices-for-file-naming/

2. **Use of Jargon on a webpage** – Dealing with Technical or Professional Jargon

3. **On the "About" this unit page** – consider having at least one officer show their phone number and/or email address. This counts as "contact information" from the requirements, above.

4. **Webpage Link Parameters Settings** – Recommended WOW parameter settings for various types of Hypertext links:

   a. On-page Link (page to page) – When linking from page to page, whether within the same website or to an external website, set the Link Properties "Target:" parameter to "Same window".

   b. On-page link (to a file) – When linking to a document or file on the current website or an external website, set the Link Properties "Target:" parameter to "New Window".

   c. Menu option link (to a page) – When using a menu option to link to another webpage, set the "New Window" parameter to "No" for that link.

d. Menu option link (to a file) – When using a menu option to link to a file (PDF, spreadsheet, Word document, PowerPoint, video, etc.), set the "New Window" parameter to "Yes" for that link.

For more information on this topic, read:
https://www.nngroup.com/articles/new-browser-windows-and-tabs/.

5. **Hierarchy of Emphasis** – Starting with the lowest level first.

a. Punctuation – includes the following symbols:

   i. Quote marks – Avoid using quote marks for emphasis.

   ii. Exclamation points – Avoid using exclamation points for emphasis.

   iii. Avoid using spaces and punctuation inappropriately, for emphasis – For example, L O B S T E R S or L.O.B.S.T.E.R.S. might look interesting to you but would foil a user who was searching for "lobsters." Unusual punctuation also reduces scannability and would be annoying to visually impaired users whose audio browsers spell out the word instead of reading it as a word.

b. *Italics* – is the best way to emphasize text (words or phrases).

c. Underscore – *Reserve underlining exclusively for links*. Because underlines provide a strong perceived affordance of clickability, users will be confused and disappointed if underlined text doesn't have an actual affordance to match this perception.

d. **Bold** – If everything is bold, then bold has no meaning. Bold is typically used just for headings, sub-headings when writing for the web. If you decide to bold a word or phrase, do so judiciously.

e. ALL CAPS – Use all uppercase letters sparingly or not at all as a formatting style. All uppercase words are not as easy to read as mixed case words, and they can make the page look busy and loud. For example, "PSYCHOLOGY OF WORDS" is not as readable as "Psychology of Words."

6. **Typeface to use** – To maintain continuity throughout your website's webpages, it is recommended that you use the Verdana typeface. This is the

same typeface used by WOW II on its vertical and horizontal menus, and on any specialty page where WOW prints text on the webpage for you i.e., Page headings, sub-headings, the Meeting Information and Inquiries areas, etc.

Below are the recommended font sizes and which to use Bold on:

a. **Major Headings** **(Bold, Font = Verdana, Font size = 11)**

b. **Sub-headings** **(Bold, Font = Verdana, Font size = 10)**

c. Body text (Normal, Font = Verdana, Font size = 10)

d. Foot notes (Normal, Font = Verdana, Font size = 8)

7. **Navigation Menu Name Lengths –** Below are sizing guidelines for navigation menu name lengths based on whether it is a first, second or third level menu name, and whether the page is protected or not.

The following illustrate menu name lengths **with** page protection (⊘):

▶ xxxx+xxxx1xxxx+xxxx ⊘   19 characters (first level)

▶ xxxx+xxxx1xxxx+xx ⊘   17 characters (second level)

▶ xxxx+xxxx1xxxx+ ⊘   15 characters (third level)

The following illustrate menu name lengths **without** page protection:

▶ xxxx+xxxx1xxxx+xxxx2x   21 characters (first level)

▶ xxxx+xxxx1xxxx+xxxx   19 characters (second level)

▶ xxxx+xxxx1xxxx+xx   17 characters (third level)

It is important to note that the use of capital letters, special characters and spaces between words will have an effect on the overall length of the menu name from what is shown above, and may result in a menu name that line-wraps. You can correct this is a couple of ways. You can re-phrase the menu name, abbreviate one or more of the words in the name, or both.

8. **Better Labels for Website Links** – There are 4 guidelines for writing the link texts on websites to ensure users click the right options. Links should be:

1. Specific
2. Sincere
3. Substantial,

    4. Succinct

Watch video: https://www.nngroup.com/videos/better-link-labels/

9. **Information Scent of Menu Names** – When deciding which links to click on the web, users choose those with the highest information scent — which is a mix of cues that they get from the link label, the context in which the link is shown, and their prior experiences.

    Watch video: https://www.nngroup.com/videos/information-scent/

10. **When To Use Long Menu Lists** – Hicks law (or the Hick–Hyman law) says that the more choices you present to your users, the longer it takes them to reach a decision. However, combining Hick's Law with other design techniques can make long menus easy to use.

    Watch video: https://www.nngroup.com/videos/hicks-law-long-menus/

National Approval of New Websites and Previously Unapproved Websites

In order to complete the formal National approval process in a timely manner, a time limit of one year will be imposed for all approval requests that need to have compliance issues addressed. The National IT staff will provide a 60-day notice to the contact person that the request for approval will be deleted at the one-year mark. After that time, the SNF (Site Notification Form) will be deleted and the approval process will have to be initiated anew.