Cleaning up your Mass.gov documents

July 17, 2025

What is Content Lab?

- Focuses on **Content Strategy**: Managing your content to reach target audiences and using data and feedback to improve content and user experience

- Community of practice

  - Values ongoing learning and continuous improvement

  - Flexible format

  - Thrives on active participation

Content Lab is aligned to the Digital Roadmap, supporting the goal of high-quality, accessible, user-centric content on state websites

Our purpose: Learning + better content

Community of practice

- We want to continually grow and improve

- We use real content examples – yours and ours

- The **methods** and practices are the point

Mass.gov content

- Clear before clever

- Current

- Constituent-friendly

"Deep dive into documents" series

- Today: Audit your documents and get rid of ROT

- July 24: Managing your documents

- July 31: Interactive workshop

- August 14: Converting documents to HTML and options for long, complex documents

- Check ACCESS page for upcoming trainings on making documents accessible!

Agenda

- ROT refresher

- Purpose of a document inventory

- Setting up a document inventory

- Finding ROT among your documents

- Putting your work plan into action

- Wrap up

ROT refresher

- **R**edundant – Duplicated or repeated information already available elsewhere

- **O**bsolete – Outdated or inaccurate information that is no longer relevant or useful

- **T**rivial – Unimportant or insignificant information that adds no value

ROT = Digital junk drawer

Guide to cleaning up Mass.gov documents

How to clean up your Mas.gov documents

Purpose of a document inventory

Documents are content, too

- Maintaining your agency's online documents is just as important as maintaining its webpages

- Published documents can almost always be found by somebody, even if they're not linked

- You need to make sure they're kept up-to-date and providing accurate information

- Properly cleaning up your old documents means constituents will find relevant information and you'll have fewer pieces of content to manage

What is a document inventory?

- Gives you a full picture of your documents

- Keeps those documents organized

- Helps you manage audit workflows

  - Prioritize and track the status of that work

- Provides transparency for your team

ID	Title	Permalink	Organization	Publication s	Start Date	Last revised	Link to Media	Label(s)	Listing desc	Collections	Extension	File size
2959361	Cybersecurit	https://www.	Executive Off	Published	7/16/25	7/16/25	https://edit.mass.gov/doc/cybersecurity-headlines-fr			pdf	8.16 MB
2959351	Cybersecurit	https://www.	Executive Off	Published	7/16/25	7/16/25	https://edit.mass.gov/doc/cybersecurity-headlines-fr			pdf	8.31 MB
2958906	joe test imag	https://www.	Executive Off	Unpublished	7/15/25	7/15/25	https://edit.mass.gov/doc/joe-test-image			png	204.41 KB
2878081	EOTSS Organ	https://www.	Executive Off	Published	1/24/25	7/14/25	https://edit.mass.gov/doc/eotss-organization-chart-1			pdf	1.3 MB
2801701	FY26 Rate Ca	https://www.	Executive Off	Published	7/9/25	7/10/25	https://edit.mass.gov/doc/fy26-rate-card			xlsx	300.36 KB
2801706	FY26 Adobe a	https://www.	Executive Off	Published	7/5/25	7/10/25	https://edit.mass.gov/doc/fy26-adobe-and-microsoft-			xlsx	18.66 KB
2956546	Cybersecurit	https://www.	Executive Off	Published	7/8/25	7/8/25	https://edit.mass.gov/doc/	Cybersecurity Headlines fr		pdf	5.45 MB
2956196	Cybersecurit	https://www.	Executive Off	Published	7/7/25	7/7/25	https://edit.mass.gov/doc/	Cybersecurity Headlines fr		pdf	5.79 MB
2955091	FY26 New Ch	https://www.	Executive Off	Published	7/2/25	7/2/25	https://edit.mass.gov/doc/fy26-new-chargeback-mod			pdf	352.82 KB
2883021	FY26 New Ch	https://www.	Executive Off	Published	2/3/25	7/2/25	https://edit.mass.gov/doc/	FY26 New Chargeback Mo		pdf	339.83 KB
1794951	ITS82 IT Acce	https://www.	Executive Off	Published	7/1/25	7/1/25	https://edit.mass.gov/doc/its82-it-accessibility-servic			pdf	454.99 KB
2953346	massdep des	https://www.	Executive Off	Published	6/27/25	6/27/25	https://edit.mass.gov/doc/	massdep designated dense		png	471 KB
2203236	EOTSS Comn	https://www.	Office of Sec	Published	11/4/20	6/25/25	https://edit.r	EOTSS Defined Services		pdf	147.63 KB

Setting up a document inventory

Finding your documents in the Mass.gov CMS

To download a full list of your agency's Mass.gov documents:

- Go to "All Documents" in the CMS

- Filter for your Org
  - Add additional filters if necessary, like labels or dates

- We want published AND unpublished documents

- Download the CSV and convert it to an Excel spreadsheet

Organizing your inventory spreadsheet

- Now you've got a big spreadsheet with lots of data

- We're going to add a few more useful columns:

  - Notes
  - ROT status
  - Action
  - Priority
  - Level of effort

File name	Notes	ROT status	Action	Priority	Level of Effort
New & improved program 2025			Keep		
New and improved program 2025	Duplicate of "New & improved program 2025."	Redundant	Delete	Low	Low
Policy one-pager	This info will be more accessible as a Mass.gov page		Convert to a webpage	Medium	High
Draft stakeholder presentation	This is a draft slide deck attached to a Mass.gov Event page. Either get rid of it or replace it with the final version presented at the meeting.	Trivial	Update / Delete	Medium	Low
New program 2022 brochure	Program is defunct now.	Obsolete	Delete	High	Low
Supplemental application form			Keep		
ABCD program brochure	Program name has changed, but info is still valid		Update	High	Low

Organizing your inventory spreadsheet

- **Notes** – Notes or observations by you or a colleague while reviewing a document

- **ROT status** – If the document is ROT, use this column to label it accordingly

- **Action** – What action you're planning to take. For example, keeping or deleting a document or converting it into a Mass.gov page.

- **Priority** – Is this action a high, medium, or low priority for you/your agency?

- **Level of effort** – Will this action require a high, medium, or low level of effort to execute?

Finding ROT among your documents

Guiding questions when reviewing for ROT

- The overall review process doesn't have to (and won't) be done all at once

- Break the work up into smaller chunks or phases

- A great place to start is reviewing the data in your inventory spreadsheet before moving on to assessing the contents of your documents

Reviewing your inventory spreadsheet

- Does this share the same or closely related title with another document?

- Does this title reference outdated programs or past dates?

- Are there signs this is an outdated version of something newer, or a new version of something older?
  - Example: Words like "draft," "update," or "version 1, 2, 3, etc."

- Has this file been updated in the last 12 months?

Reviewing the contents of your documents

- Digging into the contents of your documents is going to take some time

- Consider chunking by:
    - File type
    - File size
    - Publication or last updated date
    - Publication status (published or unpublished)
    - Labels
    - Language
    - Subject matter

Reviewing the contents of your documents

- Is there another document with overlapping or identical content?

- Do your webpages already provide better and more meaningful coverage of this content?

- Is this information still accurate?

  - Does it reference past dates or expired programs?

  - Does it reflect current branding or messaging?

- Is this content meaningful for your constituents?

  - Would anyone notice if it disappeared?

Putting your work plan into action

Using the "priority" and "level of effort" columns

- We added these columns to our inventory to help prioritize our work plan

- Consider these criteria when filling out the columns and planning next steps:

  - How many people it will affect (priority)

  - How much of an impact it has on your brand (priority)

  - How easy it will be to do (level of effort)

- Use a scale of "low," "medium," and "high" or get more granular as needed

- Don't assume you need to address everything at once

- Set realistic expectations

What might a work plan look like?

1. Easy changes that affect lots of people.

   ○ Example: Remove out-of-date and often downloaded documents.

2. Difficult changes that affect lots of people.

   ○ Example: Replace out-of-date and often downloaded documents.

3. Easy changes that affect some people.

   ○ Example: Link a document that nobody can find to multiple pages.

4. Difficult changes that affect some people.

   ○ Example: Convert a document that few people use to HTML.

What different kinds of action look like

- Remove or move to trash – Usually quick and easy, but make sure you aren't creating any broken links

- Update – Can sometimes be a fix, other times a band-aid

- Convert to HTML – Time and resource intensive, but often a more stable solution

- Archive – Sometimes a required alternative to deleting

Trashing your document

- Usually quick and easy

- Make sure you aren't creating any broken links

- Use the Pages linking here tool and Siteimprove to check

Home > **Plain Language Review Worksheet 0.3.05.25.docx**

Pages linking here

| VIEW | EDIT | **PAGES LINKING HERE** | REVISIONS | SCHEDULED TRANSITIONS (0) |

1 total records.

The list below shows pages that include a link to this page in structured and rich text fields. **Learn how to use Linking Pages.**

Entity	Content Type	Field name	Status
How to conduct a plain language review	Information Details	Body	Published

Updating your document

- Can sometimes be a fix, other times a band-aid

- Important: Remove and replace the outdated document, don't create a brand new one

Select the file *

ACCESSIBILITY: All documents **must** be accessible so that visitors who need assistive technology can use them. Test your documents prior to uploading **using the guidance found in our Knowledge Base**.

PUBLIC LINK: The public site should always link to the latest published version of the document which you can access on the "View" tab after you save and publish.

WARNING: Never use the link below on the public site. This is for preview only.

ARCHIVING: Please **submit a copy of PDF, Word, or Excel documents to the State Library** for archiving. (opens in new tab)

UPDATING: If you update this document, please remember to also update each translated version of it as well, following your Organization's usual process for document translation.

📄 **Plain Language Review Worksheet 0.3.05.25.docx**   Remove

Converting your document to HTML

- Time and resource intensive

- Often a more stable solution

- Benefits:
  - More accessible
  - Easier to update in the future
  - Access to more web analytics and visitor feedback

Archiving your document

- Sometimes a required alternative to deleting
  - When in doubt, check with legal

- [Guide for state organizations on archiving documents](#)

Questions?

Wrap up

- Survey

- We post everything in the Content Lab Teams channel

- See you for our next session **July 24**

- [Sign up for a Content Lab Consult](#) if you're looking for help with a content strategy issue