The Department of the Interior
Plain Writing Act Compliance Report

2022

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 (Act) requires Federal agencies to apply plain language principles to written communication. The Act states that all government agencies should write in a way that the public can easily understand and use information provided.

This report outlines the Department of the Interior's (Department) progress towards implementing the Plain Writing Act of 2010.

Our Commitment

The Department has a vast mission and responsibility to protect and manage the nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provide scientific and other information about those resources; and honor trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated Island Communities. Given the Department's central role in how the United States stewards its public lands, increases environmental protections, pursues environmental justice, and honors nation-to-nation relationships with Tribes, it is critical that the Department effectively, efficiently, and reliably present information. The Department is committed to communicating clearly, concisely, and in a way that is easy to understand.

Our Progress and Accomplishments

We implement the Department-wide plain language program by communicating:
- The importance of using plain language
- Best practices and helpful tips
- Leadership's interest in and support of plain writing
- Training opportunities

The Department is committed to providing the following plain language resources to all employees:
- The Plain Language webpage on DOI.gov
- Virtual training
- Guidance on plain language best practices

Oversight

Designated Senior Official for Plain Language
Sarah Greenberger, Associate Deputy Secretary

Departmental Plain Language Coordinator
Mark Purdy, Office of the Executive Secretariat and Regulatory Affairs

Implementation Plan

The Department's Plain Writing Implementation Plan is available on its public-facing plain writing website.

Compliance Report

You are reading our 2022 Compliance Report, which was published in August 2022. The completion and online publication of this report satisfies the Act's requirement for a public-facing compliance report.

Feedback from the Public

The Department provides the following email address that allows the public to communicate ideas or concerns about the Department's plain language program: PlainLanguage@ios.doi.gov.

Website Access

The Department encourages employees to use plain language in all materials. To support this effort, we maintain a webpage devoted to plain language. This webpage is available at doi.gov/plainlanguage. This webpage links to the Department's Plain Writing Implementation Plan, plain language leadership at the Department, and outlines how the public can provide their feedback on plain language to us.

Training

The Department provides virtual training to employees through an internal training platform called DOI Talent. Currently, the Department offers the following plain language trainings:

- Plain Language Writing, which contains the following modules:
  - Module 0 - Overview
  - Module 1 - Using Plain Language
  - Module 2 - Addressing Your Audience
  - Module 3 - Writing in Plain Language
  - Module 4 - Active Voice
  - Module 5 - Organize for Your Audience
  - Module 6 - Organize with Headers
  - Module 7 - Using Lists
  - Module 8 – Using Tables
  - Module 9 – Conclusion

- The Plain Writing Act, a Skillsoft training that explains how to:
  - Meet the requirements under the Plain Language Act.
  - Write for your audience.
  - Organize content and write clearly.
  - Improve clarity.
  - Write web content.

- Business Writing: A Plain Language Approach, a DOI University course that teaches participants to:
    - Write documents that are precise, clear, concise, and well organized.
    - Create written communications that are both readable and suitable for their intended audiences.
    - Understand writing as a process, not just a product.
    - Clarify the purpose of your writing.
    - Create a plan or "blueprint."
    - Use concise, direct sentence structure.
    - Focus on actions and results.
    - Adjust style and pace to the reader.
    - Maintain consistency of style and terminology.

The Office of Communication's Role in Meeting Plain Language Requirements

The Department's Office of Communications provides leadership, expertise, and coordination to develop successful communications strategies and products that advance the Department's mission. To guide effective communications across the Department, the Office of Communications has a dedicated section in their Standard Operating Procedures for plain language best practices and resources.

Putting Plain Language into Practice

The Department will continue its efforts to promote plain language Department-wide and to educate employees on the tenets of the Act.

The Department continues to promote plain language by:
- Sharing plain writing tips, resources, and trainings in the Department's all employee digest, a weekly email distribution to employees.
- Maintaining an internal plain language resource center on its employee intranet site.
- Providing verbal reminders in regular meetings with representatives from across the Department.
- Using and sharing the resources available through the Plain Language Action and Information Network's (PLAIN) website.

We will continue to encourage staff to review and update public-facing documents and websites to ensure we are preparing materials appropriately, matching the tone and style to the intended audience.

The Department is working towards full compliance with the Act and has fulfilled requirements such as:
- Maintaining the Department's Plain Language webpage.
- Designating a senior official for plain language.
- Encouraging feedback from the public and stakeholders to identify communications that require improvements.
- Publishing the annual compliance report on the Department's public website.