# A Common Look and Feel for Delaware State Government Web Sites

This document provides a general description of, and introduction to, the 2013 edition of Delaware Common Look and Feel (CLF 3.0).

## Purpose:

The Delaware Website Common Look and Feel (CLF) is designed to meet five goals:

1. Create a Delaware "brand" for on-line content that gives visitors the confidence that they are on a State Government web site.
2. Provide a consistent, well-designed web site layout that is responsive and works across multiple browsers and devices.
3. Establish consistent core elements for state agency web sites to enable visitors to easily find the information they need.
4. Increase the accessibility of agency web sites so that all visitors, regardless of any physical challenges, can find information.
5. Make it easier for state agencies to maintain and update their web sites in order to keep content fresh, current and most useful for visitors.

## Overview: CLF 3.0

The 2013 edition of Delaware's Common Look and Feel is the third iteration of the CLF, which was first developed by the Government Information Center (GIC) in 2001. The CLF was originally developed as part of an effort to standardize core web content, increase the level of web page accessibility, and ease citizen interaction with State agencies. The CLF 3.0 edition adds responsive design and begins to make use of new tools made available via HTML5 and CSS3.

The new CLF incorporates the State-approved *Web Presentation Standards* promulgated by the Department of Technology and Information. The CLF is designed to create a brand for state agency web sites and ensure a consistent user experience for visitors. The high-level goal for the CLF is to ensure that visitors have a positive, constructive experience while using state agency web sites.

## CLF Branding

The CLF is designed to live within a Delaware-branded frame that includes a standard top bar and a standard, statewide footer. These elements include common, state-portal based links and information, including a multi-search tool that can search the agency's site, the statewide web sites, or a statewide phone directory.

The top bar can also include an optional seasonal image that adds color and visual interest. This is an optional feature that can be selected by agencies wishing to add color and visual interest to pages that may lack imagery. It can also be turned off.

Page footers include both an agency footer area that can be configured by agency web masters and a standard statewide footer. The agency footer should include a "home" link, a "contact" link and an FAQ/Help link.

## "Portal To-Go"

The new CLF header includes a "portal to go" drop-down drawer that provides quick links to statewide service and information from the delaware.gov portal. Content in this drawer is maintained by the GIC.

## Responsive Design

CLF 3.0 is designed to be viewed on the broadest possible range of web devices. The CLF architecture has been configured to allow agencies to publish content once and have it appear, as designed, on full size desktop browsers[1] and pad-style browsers, and to also work on smaller smartphone devices. Content will shift gracefully to accommodate different screen widths, with elements rearranging to fit different screens. At smaller screen sizes, some elements will disappear or retreat behind touch-activated buttons.

## Accessibility

A primary goal of the state's CLF approach is to increase the level of accessibility of agency websites. Web managers, particularly those in the public sector, must consider how their websites will render in different user agents and browsers, since discriminating against people who use assistive technologies is against the law. The Delaware CLF architecture and page templates are designed to be as accessible as possible, though they are not designed to meet any particular published standard.

Only users of state web sites will be able to tell if a page is truly accessible, but the basic CLF 3.0 templates have been tested using the Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool (WAVE)[2] provided by WebAIM, a non-profit organization within the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University. The WAVE tool tests web pages for many accessibility issues and looks for possible compliance issues with many of the Section 508 and WCAG guidelines. It also flags potential accessibility problems not specified in the usual guidelines and standards. It is designed as guidance for web developers as they consider all aspects of web design, including accessibility.

The basic templates for CLF 3.0 turned up no red flags in the WebAIM WAVE test.

## Navigation

As in past editions of the CLF, the latest iteration is designed around a standard classification and taxonomy structure that organizes agency web site content into three general areas: Home, Services, and Information. This approach avoids forcing visitors to learn the administrative structure of an agency in order to find information and services.

A standard approach to web site navigation is built-in to the CLF. It includes common, statewide header and footer elements as well as agency-configurable left-side navigation and an agency-specific footer. These elements, and their use, are detailed in the CLF 3.0 Navigation and Taxonomy document.

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[1] CLF is designed to be fully functional on Internet Explorer 7 and above, as well as Chrome, Safari, Firefox and other major browsers (See *CLF 3.0 Tested Platforms and Browsers*). It is designed to "fail gracefully" on older browsers.

[2] See http://wave.webaim.org/

## Architecture

The Common Look and Feel architecture consists of a set of basic, interacting components:

- HTML5 markup
- The Bootstrap web toolkit
- CSS3 cascading style sheets
- JavaScript/JQuery web programming
- Server-side includes

### HTML5 Markup

HTML5 is the fifth and latest revision of the original HTML markup language. It was developed to continue past improvements to HTML while adding support for multimedia files. Developers further wanted to keep the language readable by humans and consistently understood by computers and devices. Using HTML5 allows the CLF to begin to take advantage of some of the latest web site techniques.

### Bootstrap

Bootstrap is a front-end web toolkit for rapid development of web applications. It was developed by the developers of twitter and is a collection of CSS and HTML conventions, and JavaScript, designed to work with multiple browsers and devices. Bootstrap allows the CLF to be more responsive and to adapt itself to different device sizes, screen resolutions and browsers.

### CSS3

CSS3 is the latest iteration of the Cascading Style Sheets style sheet language used for describing the look and formatting content in HTML documents. Concentrating the presentation details of CLF web pages in a set of common style sheets frees agency web masters from having to worry overmuch about page layouts, color schemes, and text formatting. Adherence to common styling through CSS helps maintain a standard branding for state agency web sites.

As with earlier versions, most CSS used in the CLF will be maintained centrally by GIC and apply across all sites. There will be some CSS files specific to agency web pages that will be maintained by individual agencies. State Agencies will have the option to customize and style some elements related to their content. But they will not be able to change the styles of the top "portal to go" bar or of the state portal portion of the page footer.

### Server-Side Includes

Server-side include (SSI) files are common elements and content that are maintained centrally and automatically inserted into many web pages via HTML code. This eases site maintenance since items like navigation menus can be maintained for a whole site by simply editing one includable HTML file.

The standard left-navigation column on an interior CLF page, for example, is added to a CLF page via this code snippet:

```
<!--framework--><!--#include virtual="/usr/CLF_nav_bar.shtml" -->
```

There are SSI files built into the CLF that are maintained by the GIC and apply across all sites. These include files are used to create the header, footer and related, general content. Other SSI files will be maintained by and under the control of individual agency web masters. These include agency-level navigation files and the agency-specific footer files.

*A Note About Shared Files*

Shared files include CSS files and SSI files. For many agencies, these files will be maintained on a central server. Some agencies that have their own servers will be provided copies of SSI files (and subsequent updates) to maintain on their own systems.

## Meta Tags and Metadata

All state of Delaware web sites must include at least basic meta tags and metadata that provide important orientation information to users and to online tools such as indexing tools, search engines, text translation scripts, and navigation tools. Information inserted in metadata fields is the responsibility of individual agencies and should be concise and page appropriate. Some metadata elements, such as keywords and description, should be unique to each web page to prevent erroneous search engine results and/or confusion in some text browsers.

*Required Metadata Elements[3]*

- Description
  ```
  <meta name="description" content="This page contains…">
  ```
  The description element should provide a succinct description of the contents of that particular page.
- Keywords
  ```
  <meta name="keywords" content="keyword1, keyword2, etc ">
  ```
  Keywords should include the most likely search terms with which a user might be expected to find the web site. Generally, each web page should have about 20 carefully-chosen keywords. Adding too many keywords can lead to being listed as a spam site by search engines. Too few and users will not find your content.
- Title
  ```
  <title>State of Delaware - <!--#include
  virtual="/usr/CLF_site_title_child_name.html"--> - [page name]</title>
  ```
  Note that the "title" element incorporates an agency-maintained server-side include (SSI) file to help maintain consistency. It is important that site titles consistently follow this format: "State of Delaware - <agency name> - <page name>"

*Optional Metadata Elements*

- Subject
- Contributor
- Type
- Source
- Relation
- Rights
- Creator
- Publisher
- Date
- Identifier
- Coverage

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[3] Note: Metatag names, particularly "description" and "keywords" should be all lower case.