

Implementing the Digital Service Standards

Standards 1-14

Ensuring a good user experience



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Introduction

The Information Systems Agency of Armenia is continuing the policy set by the Ministry of High Tech Industry of Armenia on the Digital Service Standards, created to support state bodies to design and build services that are:

- **User centric**
- **Accessible**
- **Consistent**

The service standard is based on research and best practice from around the world, tailored to the specific needs of users in Armenia. There are currently 14 standards, which are designed to ensure consistent user experience for digital government services.

We are ready to support your teams in implementing the standards.



Standard 1:

Ensure visibility of the digital service and associated information

Users should effortlessly locate the required service and information on government websites, where they often engage in actions related to different life situations (e.g., applying for a pension, obtaining tax information, registering a birth).

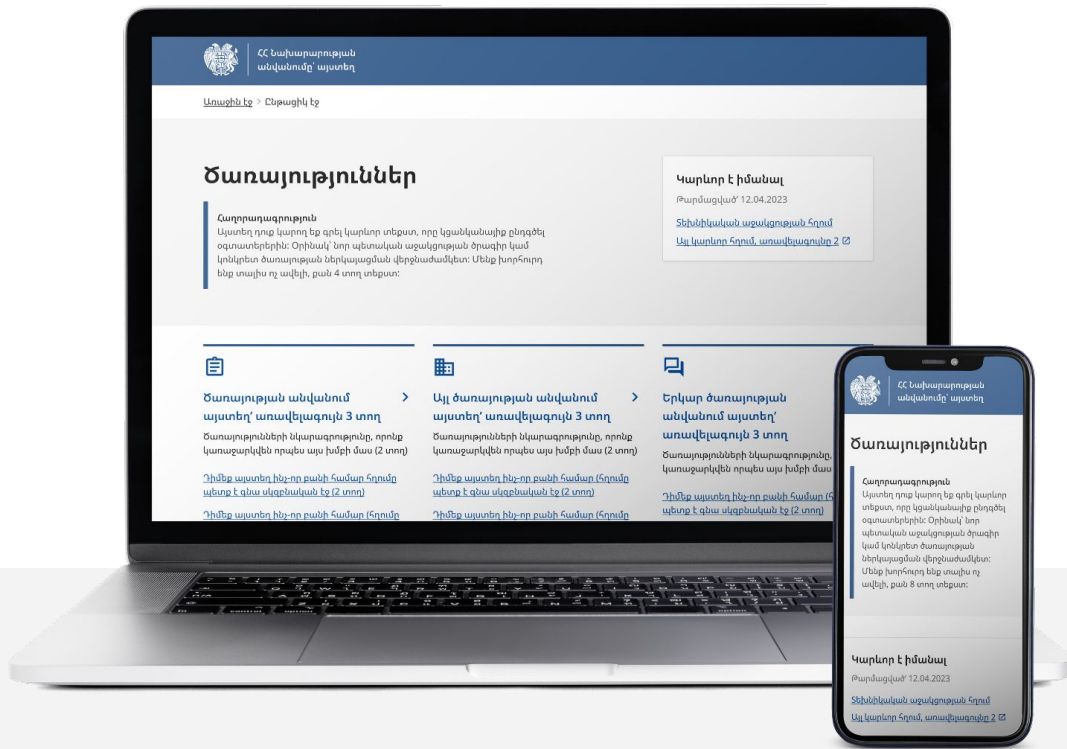
Government bodies must guarantee that website information is easily searchable and presented concisely and clearly.

Checklist

- ✓ The “Services” section should be placed as the first item on official ministry web pages
- ✓ Give your service a name that is clear and understandable to users (Example “Apply for a replacement passport” is **better** than “Online passport and visa application system”)
- ✓ Create a clear ‘landing page’ for your department’s digital services. This will become your ‘service window’ page. (Example: [here](#))
- ✓ Write clear & concise accompanying information for services. Do not copy and paste directly from laws.
- ✓ The services and landing page or ‘window’ should be technologically independent from the static Ministry website. For example, a separate subdomain and website page group
- ✓ Every service should have it’s own unique URL (link) so that it can be linked easily from other websites , e.g. `services.ministry.gov.am/applyforsomething`. Use the gov.am domain.
- ✓ Divide large online forms into smaller steps. Don’t place all the fields on one page. (Example: [here](#))
- ✓ Services and accompanying information should be available in Armenian and English languages. Other languages can be added if required



Implementing the standard



Example

“Service Window” [template](#) from the Henaket design system



Standard 2:

Have a multi-skilled team when developing a digital service

When developing a digital service, it is essential to establish a skilled and diverse team, including accountable individuals with decision-making authority.

This collaborative team responds collectively to user feedback and evolving needs, enabling swift decision-making and enhancing service quality.

Checklist

- ✓ A 'service manager' is appointed from the ministry or state body. The person should be given time to work on the digital service
- ✓ The service manager should read and learn the digital service standard and digitisation guide. They should take part in training to learn key digital service management skills
- ✓ Ensure that you have the following roles or functions covered in the team that is working on the digital service (either internally or by the vendor):
 - User researcher
 - Business analyst
 - Content designer / writer
 - User interface designer
 - Software engineer
 - QA (Quality Assurance Engineer)
 - Technical architect
 - Legal advisor/lawyer

Note

You can find more details about [the team roles](#) in the service design kit.



Standard 3:

Understand users and their needs

Initiating the creation of a digital service involves understanding the users and their needs. Without knowing who they are and what they require, the development of a successful digital service is not possible.

To achieve this, it is crucial to thoroughly analyze the sequential steps users take, enabling the delivery of a simple and efficient service.

The actual problem identified during the exploration of user needs may differ from the initially perceived issue in service design. Regular research and testing help reduce the risk of developing an inaccurate service that fails to meet user needs.

Checklist

- ✓ Before building a digital service, start by researching users and their needs. This is called a 'discovery phase'
- ✓ Use the 'discovery phase' plan from the service design kit to ensure you complete each activity
- ✓ The team should carry out interviews with at least 5 end users to understand their needs
[Example: here](#)
- ✓ Ensure you consider the service from 'end to end'. This means improving 'back office' business processes, and parts of a service where a user still needs to do something offline
- ✓ Prototypes and draft designs should be tested with end users before they are launched



Standard 4:

Establish measurable goals for digital services

Setting clear criteria aids in assessing user satisfaction with an online service, and continuous analysis of performance data helps proactively identify potential service issues.

Transparently publishing service performance data enables a comparative evaluation of the quality of various publicly funded state services. This approach assists in identifying less utilized or more costly services, among other factors.

Checklist

- ✓ As a minimum - you should implement the **'4 key measures'** on your digital service:
 1. Services (pages) with the most visits
 2. Digital uptake rate
 3. User satisfaction rates (directly from user feedback)
 4. Successful transactions rate
- ✓ Implement an analytics tool to help you track these measures
- ✓ The analytics results should be easily accessible by the service manager, without the need for intervention from technical specialists
- ✓ Check the '4 key measures' on a monthly basis, and use the results to make improvements



Standard 5:

Develop simple online forms

While some services have been digitized, the continued use of paper application forms on online platforms can create unnecessary complexity for users. Avoiding direct duplication and instead simplifying online forms is crucial to ensuring the best user experience.

Checklist

- ✓ Avoid replicating 'paper forms' as 'online forms'
- ✓ Use the 'step by step, or 'one thing per page' approach for structuring forms
- ✓ Before collecting data, make sure you check whether it is really needed e.g. if it is required for processing the application or providing the service
- ✓ Don't ask users for data that is already held in other state databases. You should retrieve the data from the source, for example, passport number should be retrieved from the police database via the interoperability platform. We call this the 'once only' principle
- ✓ When designing the forms, use the layout and page pattern shown in the [Henaket design system](#) (start page, step by step data collection, 'check your answers' page, confirmation page)
- ✓ Test your online forms with end users, make sure that they can use them successfully
- ✓ In many cases, application forms (and their format) will be written as part of legislation for a particular service, check with your legal specialist if you need to update legal texts



Standard 6:

Implement standardized design approaches using a 'Henaket' design system and templates

People expect digital services to follow a familiar structure based on past experiences. Divergence in the structure of digital services, such as varying page layouts or menu locations, requires users to constantly 'learn' new interfaces, wasting their time and undermining universal trust in the state.

To enhance the user experience, online tools for such services should be standardized, work cohesively, and maintain quality, irrespective of the providing government agency.

Checklist

- ✓ Services should be designed using the [Henaket](#) design system (Government header, footer, components, fonts, colours)
- ✓ The use of the Henaket design system should be included in technical specifications and provided to software vendors
- ✓ Page layouts and structures should follow the [patterns and templates](#) provided in the design system
- ✓ Services should be designed to work on mobile devices (responsive design). The majority of users now use the internet on mobile devices
- ✓ Don't break the rules of colour, typography (fonts) and page layouts in the design system



Standards 7:

Make sure the digital services are accessible to everyone

Accessible and inclusive services facilitate equal access and participation, allowing people with diverse needs to navigate, interact, and benefit from digital platforms, regardless of their physical, sensory, or cognitive abilities.

Following accessibility standards not only ensures legal compliance but also expands user engagement and satisfaction, fostering an equitable and ethically sound digital landscape.

Checklist

- ✓ Follow and meet at least the AA level of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1) requirements
- ✓ Include people with disabilities in user research
- ✓ Test the websites with the most common assistive technologies, including screen magnifiers, screen readers, and speech recognition tools
- ✓ Have an accessibility statement posted on the website explaining how accessible the digital service is.



Standard 8:

Choose agile working methods

By using agile methods, you can get your service up and running quickly. With these methods, the chances of mistakes and problems in the service are minimized.

You build the service step by step, test it, and launch it bit by bit. This way, you listen to what users say and make changes accordingly. Because of this flexible approach, you can avoid a lot of the issues that might pop up after the service is launched.

Checklist

- ✓ Identify the goals and requirements of the project. Break down the project into smaller tasks or features (user stories) and prioritize these tasks based on their importance and impact.
- ✓ Work in short timeframes called "sprints" (usually 1-2 weeks). Design, develop, and test these tasks within the sprint.
- ✓ Hold regular team meetings (daily stand-ups) to discuss progress and challenges. Reflect on the completed sprints and identify areas for improvement.
- ✓ Gather feedback from users, team members, and stakeholders. Use this feedback to make improvements and adjustments as needed.
- ✓ Adjust priorities and tasks based on feedback and changing requirements.



Standard 9:

Justify the choice of technologies

Choosing the right tools and technologies ensures that a project is equipped with the most suitable resources to effectively address its unique challenges and requirements.

Opting for established tools can expedite implementation, leveraging tested functionalities, and potentially reducing development time. On the other hand, building technology in-house grants greater control and customization, aligning precisely with the organization's vision and processes.

Striking the right balance between buying and building, alongside selecting appropriate tools and technologies, empowers digital initiatives to maximize efficiency, innovation, and long-term viability.

Checklist

- ✓ Before deciding whether to buy or build a technology, create a business case which clearly answers why the technology is needed, what problem it is going to solve, who is going to benefit from it and what the success metrics are going to be.
- ✓ Ensure that interoperability and data sharing between the state and the citizen work on a "once only" basis
- ✓ Try to automate the tools and processes as much as possible
- ✓ Avoid depending only on one technology or provider



Standard 10:

Ensure the reliability of digital services

People expect dependable and seamless access to essential services regardless of the time of day.

Continuous service availability strengthens the nation's digital infrastructure, ensuring that critical operations can function without interruption.

This keeps users satisfied, builds trust, and boosts efficiency. In today's digital world, offering non-stop service is essential for success.

Checklist

- ✓ Perform proper monitoring of the 4 key success metrics to identify and respond to issues
- ✓ Regularly perform quality assurance (QA) testing, preferably in an automated manner.
- ✓ Sign and follow SLAs (Service level agreement). Clearly define when and who are responsible for the specific aspects of the service.
- ✓ Make maintenance changes regularly, without causing significant system disruption.



Standards 11:

Create a secure digital service

People share their private information online, like names and addresses, and they need to know it won't be stolen or misused.

When the government ensures strong security for these digital services, it helps people trust the services more. This trust encourages people to use online government services without worrying about their data.

Checklist

- ✓ Collect and store only the minimum necessary user data. Avoid retaining sensitive information that isn't required for the service's operation.
- ✓ Clearly communicate the purpose of data collection, storage, and usage to users. Obtain explicit user consent for data collection and processing.
- ✓ Conduct regular security audits and vulnerability assessments to identify and fix potential security weaknesses in the system.
- ✓ Have a well-defined plan in place to respond to data breaches or security incidents, including notifying affected users and authorities as required by law.



Standard 12:

Use open standards and common components

Digital services must be consistent and work with a unified approach, becoming crucial tools for digital transformation and open governance. By implementing the principle of adhering to standard approaches in the processes of developing software, data, and document formats, state bodies will be able to:

Checklist

- ✓ Ensure interoperability of systems.
- ✓ Utilize existing software and avoid spending resources on resolving technical problems that have already been addressed.
- ✓ Reduce dependence on any supplier or technology, facilitating quick adaptation to changes in the situation.
- ✓ Provide a level playing field for both novice and experienced suppliers.



Standard 13:

Periodically review and improve the Service

Continuous improvements should be made throughout the lifetime of the service. This will allow to uphold efficiency, transparency, citizen engagement and make sure that the service continues to solve the user's needs.

By regularly evaluating user experiences, you can identify pain points and areas for enhancement, leading to streamlined processes and improved service delivery.

This approach fosters a more inclusive and citizen-centric services, strengthens accountability and nurtures a digital ecosystem that benefits society as a whole.

Checklist

- ✓ Implement data collection and solve problems as you build the service than to go back and do it afterwards.
- ✓ Find data sources for your measurements and choose the right analytical tools to use depending on your service
- ✓ Collect feedback from citizens, stakeholders, and service users through surveys or online platforms. Analyze the comments, complaints, and suggestions to identify pain points and areas for improvement.
- ✓ Use dashboards, reports and visualisations to share findings.



Standard 14:

Consider the applicability of cloud hosting

Cloud technology provides the agility to scale services up or down according to demand, ensuring efficient resource utilization. This approach minimizes upfront infrastructure costs and allows for a pay-as-you-go model, optimizing budget allocation.

Cloud hosting not only enhances accessibility, enabling citizens to access digital services from anywhere, but also promotes inclusivity, while simultaneously offering advantages in terms of cost-efficiency, scalability, security, and improved service delivery.

Checklist

- ✓ Classify data according to sensitivity levels to determine which types can be hosted on the cloud.
- ✓ Perform a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis to compare the financial implications of cloud hosting with traditional infrastructure.
- ✓ Conduct a feasibility study to evaluate the compatibility of existing systems and applications with cloud hosting.
- ✓ Continuously monitor the cloud environment's performance, security, and cost-effectiveness after implementation.



Further information

You can find more detailed information about the standards on the [service design kit](#) website.

In addition, the Information Systems Agency of Armenia can provide guidance and training on all aspects of the current standards.

We welcome your feedback. If you have any questions, contact us via email on info@isaa.am,

