Consumer Education Website Continuous Improvement Series

Child Care Consumer Education Website Type Decision Tool

Introduction

There are different approaches you can consider when enhancing the structure of your consumer education website and identifying the type of website structure that best fits your jurisdiction's needs, resources, and capacity can be challenging. This tool is designed to simplify that process and help you choose the type of website that is best for structuring the content of your child care consumer education website.

SCBC Consumer Education Website Resources

- **Consumer Education Website Continuous Quality Improvement Series**
- **Consumer Education Website Online Module Series**
- **Consumer Education Website Resource Guides**
- **Consumer Education Website Webinar Series**

How It Works

This tool uses a questionnaire format to gather information about your current consumer education website's footprint, processes, and support team. It uses a weighted scoring system—calculated from your answers to the questionnaire—to match the website type that best fits your digital operating environment and capacity. This tool also gives you an opportunity to consider the pros and cons of each type of website structure, so you can consider the most appropriate option that balances available resources with other key factors.

Who Should Complete This Tool?

This tool is best completed by the team of people that is responsible for the jurisdiction's consumer education website. This team should include members of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) leadership team and others who are involved with the maintenance and management of the website, such as contractors and agency or website development staff.

Instructions

1. Answer the questions in each section to the best of your ability.
2. Your scores will be calculated automatically for each section.
3. Your recommended website type will be displayed in table 15 on page 10.

Questionnaire

I. Consumer Education Website Footprint

This section will ask you questions about the status of your consumer education website.

- Think about where required and recommended information for your consumer education website is currently housed.
- Review the "Choices" in table 1 and check the box next to the option that best represents your consumer education website.

Table 1. How Is Your Consumer Education Content Configured?

	Choices	Score
	We have one dedicated consumer education website. [3]	
	Our required child care consumer education information currently spans more than one website. [2]	
	We currently do not have a consumer education website or sites. [0]	

Section I score:

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II. Website Content Inventory

Think about the components on your consumer education website (or websites). Complete the content inventory below (table 2) by indicating if your website displays the component, entering the web address where the component is posted, and indicating whether you have the content authority for the specific component. "Content authority" refers to whether you have the immediate means and authority to make changes to this part of the website.

See more detailed information about CCDF requirements in the following resources:

- **"CCDF Consumer Education Website Requirements Infographic"**
- **"Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule Frequently Asked Questions: Consumer Education"**
- **"State and Territory Child Care Consumer Education Website: Self-Assessment Checklist"**

Table 2. Content Inventory: Mapping Required Components of Consumer Education Website

Components	Do you have this component?	Web Address (https://www.example.com/example)	Do you have content authority for this website?
Jurisdiction-Level Consumer Education Information			
Information on child care resource and referral agencies (required)	Yes No		Yes No
Information on licensing and monitoring process (required)	Yes No		Yes No
Contact information for Lead Agency (required)	Yes No		Yes No
Report on aggregate number of the following (required): • Deaths in child care settings • Serious injuries in child care settings • Substantiated cases of child abuse in child care settings • Total children in child care settings	Yes No		Yes No
Information on the full range of child care options available (recommended)	Yes No		Yes No
Information on child care financial assistance (recommended)	Yes No		Yes No
Information on developmental screenings (recommended)	Yes No		Yes No

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Components	Do you have this component?	Web Address (https://www.example.com/example)	Do you have content authority for this website?
Provider-Level Consumer Education Information			
Information on other types of assistance (recommended)	Yes No		Yes No
Information on child development best practices (recommended)	Yes No		Yes No
Information on IDEA Parts B and C (recommended)	Yes No		Yes No
ZIP code-based search (required)	Yes No		Yes No
Results of monitoring and health and safety inspection reports (required): • Full reports in plain language, or full reports accompanied by a plain language summary • Three years of monitoring data (required) • Date of last inspection (required) • Corrective actions • Prominent display of serious health and safety violations	Yes No		Yes No
Quality ratings for providers (required)	Yes No		Yes No
Column Totals			
Table Total			

Note: While planning for enhancements, ensure website content and design features are accessible, translatable, and in plain language.

Section II score:

1–9 = 1   10–19 = 2   20–26 = 3

III. Content Management System

This section will ask you questions about how you manage your website's digital content.

- A content management system (CMS) is software that allows content managers to create, manage, and modify content on a website without the need for specialized web development knowledge.
- A CMS handles content infrastructure and delivery.

Table 3. Content Management System

Does your consumer education website use a content management system?

Choices	Score
Yes [3]	
No [1]	

Content Types

Content types are unique categories of content, such as an event or a provider profile.

- Each content type should have clearly defined and enforced attributes that are filled in during content development. For example, if your content type is an event, its attributes might be the event's date or location.
- Structured content enables better governance and easier sharing across platforms.

Table 4. Content Storage

Is your consumer education content stored in a central repository (such as a CMS like WordPress or Drupal) and structured by content type with clearly defined attributes for each?

Choices	Score
Yes [3]	
We have some of this [2]	
No [1]	

Section III score:

IV. Content Development and Approval Process

This section will ask you questions about your process for developing and posting website content.

Table 5. Website Content Development Process

Which model best matches how you create and post new website content?

Choices	Score
Centralized: Authority and implementation come from a single team (for example, a content team is solely responsible for new content). [3]	
Hybrid: A mixture of both centralized and federated teams work together. [2]	
Federated: Different teams contribute content (for example, financial assistance team, licensing team). [1]	

Table 6. Website Content Development Readiness

Which option best describes your current consumer education content readiness?

Choices	Score
We can develop, approve, and post content quickly. [3]	
We can develop, approve, and post content, but it may take several weeks. [2]	
It can be challenging for us to develop, approve, and post content. [1]	

Table 7. Frequency of Content Updates

How often do you expect to update website content and resources, or provider-level information associated with your child care search?

Choices	Score
Weekly or more often [3]	
Monthly [2]	
Quarterly or less often [1]	

Table 8. Website Approval Process

How many people are involved in the approval process for web design and content updates to your website?

Choices	Score
A small number of individuals (mostly autonomous) [3]	
Select agencies and partners (coordinated effort) [2]	
Many agencies (chained command) [1]	

Section IV score:

V. Website Development and Management Team Capabilities

A website development and management team (web team) should include staff responsible for creating, updating, maintaining, and troubleshooting your consumer education website.

Table 9. Web Team Configuration

What is the nature of your current web team?

Choices	Score
We have an internal team or have already contracted with a team that can provide responsive, dedicated support now. [4]	
We share a team with other departments. This team can provide support now, but there may be a slight delay in response, depending on priorities. [3]	
We will be contracting with a team to provide web support within the year. [2]	
We must submit requests and wait in a queue for support. It generally takes several months or more for access to web resources. [1]	

Table 10. Web Team Expertise

Which best describes your web team's skills and expertise (as related to the website work you have planned)?

Choices	Score
Robust and comprehensive [3]	
Smaller team with limited expertise or capacity [2]	
Varies and is task or contractor dependent [1]	

Section V score:

VI. Timeline and Budget

Table 11. Enhancement Timeline
Which best captures the timeline your organization has set to implement enhancements to your consumer education website?

Choices		Score
	18 months or longer [3]	
	Within 12 months [2]	
	Within 6 months [1]	

Table 12. One-Time Funding for Enhancements
How much one-time funding (capital improvement funding, earmarks, federal grants) is available to support your website enhancements, and approximately how much one-time funding is in your budget?

Choices		Score
	Above $300K [4]	
	$200K–$300K [3]	
	$100K–$200K [2]	
	Below $100K [1]	
	None: One-time funds are unavailable [0]	

Table 13. Annual Funding for Maintenance
Do you have annual funding secured to support ongoing maintenance for your consumer education website (for example, for staff or web support)?

Choices		Score
	Dedicated line item or earmark for funding [3]	
	Funding rolled into departmental administrative expenses [2]	
	Maintenance funds are unavailable or available only on an ad hoc basis [1]	

Section VI score:

Website Type Decision Guide: Scoring and Recommendations

Remember, these are recommendations only. You should work in close consultation with web experts and technical assistance specialists to select the approach that works best for their unique needs. Full descriptions of each website type are available on the following pages, along with pros and cons you should consider for each type.

Table 14. Calculate Total from Section Scores

Section	Section Score
I. Consumer Education Website Footprint	
II. Website Content Inventory	
III. Content Management System	
IV. Content Development and Approval Processes	
V. Website Development and Management Team Capabilities	
VI. Timeline and Budget	
Total	

Table 15. Your Recommended Website Type

Recommended Website

1–20 = Hub-and-spoke website   21–30 = Nested website   31–41 = Comprehensive website

Recommended Website Types

Read more about the recommended approach for your consumer education website type, as well as other common approaches.

1. **Hub-and-spoke website:** This is a single page or a small, organized group of pages that host a curated list of preestablished resources or external web links; this type of website can be a low-lift solution for making information available to a jurisdiction's audience via a consolidated source. A site that links out to content on other sites is often referred to as a portal.

2. **Nested website:** This is a simple section or series of pages nested within a larger, more established jurisdiction website that is already designed and functioning; this type of website can strike a balance between a comprehensive resource and a manually curated hub-and-spoke portal solution and may also be a more resource-efficient option.

3. **Comprehensive website:** This is full-scale, useful, usable, and accessible website that houses all relevant consumer education resources on one website and is responsive to the needs of the community that it serves. The website is branded specifically for consumers.

Hub-and-Spoke Website

- **Technical considerations:** Hub-and-spoke websites have faster load times, are less complex to develop, and are less expensive to host and maintain, but they offer only limited control over website analytics. You may need a developer to make updates—this type of website needs frequent manual maintenance on links (including curating and fixing broken links).

- **Content management considerations:** The process for building and deploying these websites moves more quickly, as less content is made from scratch. However, relying on other websites for content can lead to variable quality or a key resource changing without your knowledge. It can also be more difficult to establish domain authority on search engines, and you could lose messaging or branding control outside the hub.

- **User experience considerations:** Navigation and content organization can be challenging because external websites will not fit the same established website taxonomy (i.e., how content is organized and classified), and users may not be able to navigate back to the website after they leave via an external link.

Nested Website

- **Technical considerations:** The level of effort needed for initial setup depends on the jurisdiction's existing infrastructure. Development standards are set by the established website's design, which may restrict your ability to add new content.

- **Content management considerations:** Nested websites are moderately scalable (because they typically use preestablished content management systems and design patterns, making it easy to add more content more quickly over time) and offer a preestablished content pipeline, stronger search engine optimization (SEO), and increased credibility from being nested in a well-established website. These websites offer some content control and make it easier to keep content updated.

- **User experience considerations:** These websites include traditional navigation, are integrated into a familiar space, and require less technical effort. However, they offer less brand control, which may diminish how well your website resonates with your target audience.

Comprehensive Website

- **Technical considerations:** Comprehensive websites offer fully customizable navigation and layout options. Although these websites require high levels of effort during initial setup, afterwards, they require less development work if you use a CMS. Full analytics capabilities can support continuous improvement of the website. This type of website requires a larger team to maintain long-term and is more complex to develop, depending on functionality. You also need to account for managing security.

- **Content management considerations:** These websites carry better authority and SEO and are infinitely scalable. You have the sole authority to reorganize content and create new sections, as well as greater latitude to experiment with different types of published content. Analytics and content control can help you make a website more responsive to user needs, and content is easier to keep up-to-date using a CMS (author once, publish and update everywhere). This type of website often requires a team of content specialists and a very high level of collaboration across multiple disciplines.

- **User experience considerations:** Comprehensive websites are interactive, with a traditional navigation scheme that fosters increased functionality. Branding and navigation are coherent. This type of website serves multiple user needs and segments in one digital product, allows for multiple points of entry, and is easier to promote. You can control accessibility, mobile friendliness, and other key user needs as part of the design process. There is the potential for website clutter if design patterns and content governance are not defined early in the process.

Table 16. Strengths and Weaknesses of Recommended Website Types at a Glance

Site Types and Factors to Consider	Technical Effort	Design Effort	Cost	User Experience	Content Management Burden	Search Engine Optimization
Hub-and-spoke website	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Very High	Low
Nested website	Low *	Low *	Low *	High	Medium *	High
Comprehensive website	High	High	High	Very High *	High	Very High *

Note: Best-case scenarios appear in green with an asterisk.

◔ Low ◑ Medium ◕ High ● Very High

- Hub-and-spoke formats are fast to stand up and may serve as short-term solutions for organizations with small budgets or complex interdepartmental approval processes. However, this comes with a long-term manual content maintenance burden that could lead to higher costs over time.
  - This is especially true given website content lives externally and you have no control over when content or links may change.
  - You also are supporting a platform that is outside of an existing website, so the initial technical and design lift could be higher than creating a consumer-focused section within an existing website.

- A nested website may allow many organizations to leverage existing platforms and resources to deliver content while sacrificing some control over user experience.

- Although a comprehensive consumer education website provides the best end-user experience and allows for the most targeted content and branding, this option often comes with the highest costs.

Table 17. Considerations and Action Items

As you discuss the results of this assessment tool, please use the table below to document any considerations and action items you identify.

Considerations	Action Items

Do You Have Questions?

If you have questions about whether your planned website enhancements meet CCDF requirements, please consult with your **Office of Child Care regional office** for guidance.

If you would like technical assistance on developing and enhancing your consumer education website, contact the Child Care State Capacity Building Center (**CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info**).