



Domains, Standards & Essential Elements

Updated May 18, 2010

Updated, January 2010.

After public review – changes have been made to Standards and Essential Elements

Summary of Standard Changes:

- 1.8 Updated Essential Elements
- 2.8 Previously Voluntary, now Mandatory (now Standard 2.5)
- 3.11 Previously Voluntary, now Mandatory (now Standard 3.7)
- 5.5 Standard & Essential Elements updated
- 8.8 New Mandatory Standard
- 15.2 New Voluntary Standard
- 16.2 New Mandatory Standard

Domains, Standards and Essential Elements

June 30, 2010

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1.0 GOVERNANCE

Mandatory Standards

- 1.1 The DMO or its parent organization has articles of incorporation (or similar legal documentation) filed with its government jurisdiction.

Essential Elements

- Copy of current articles of incorporation

- 1.2 The DMO or its parent organization has bylaws.

Essential Elements

- Current bylaws approved by DMO's governing body (with approval date)

- 1.3 The DMO publishes an approved vision and mission statement.

Essential Elements

- Vision and mission statement

- 1.4 The DMO's governing body or its parent organization shall approve a budget on an annual basis or DMOs approval schedule.

Essential Elements

- A copy of the portion of the minutes indicating approval of a budget

- 1.5 The DMO's governing body or the designated authority in a parent organization shall conduct an annual evaluation of the chief executive (CE) or executive director (ED) of the DMO.

Essential Elements

- Blank template or description of the evaluation process signed by the board chair.

- 1.6 The DMO shall follow the recommended DMAP organizational Code of Ethics.

Essential Elements

- Sign off in Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) application

- 1.7 The DMO shall develop and follow conflict-of-interest policy(ies) in governance and administration.

Essential Elements

- Copy of approved policy(ies)

- 1.8 The DMO shall develop and maintain a current strategic plan.

Essential Elements

- Copy of current strategic plan to include a 1) vision, 2) formal mission statement, and 3) long term strategies, goals and objectives. 4) Provide evidence the governing body of the DMO has adopted and monitors the strategic plan. 5) Evidence that the strategic plan is connected to operational outcomes. (e.g. budget, marketing plan, sales plan, performance measures.)
Guideline: A current plan is defined as one that is updated at least every three (3) years.

- 1.9 The DMO's governing body or its parent organization receives and reviews periodic financial reports including income and expense statements and a balance sheet.

Essential Elements

- Copy of agenda and portion of board minutes indicating review of financial reports.

- 1.10 The DMO employs or contracts with a chief executive (CE) or executive director (ED) with management experience/credentials and/or a background in destination marketing/management.

Essential Elements

- Copy of CV or resume of CE or ED, credentials are optional

- 1.11 The DMO shall utilize a formal (documented) process for the orientation of new governing body members.

Essential Elements

- Outline and table of contents for orientation process

Voluntary Standards

- 1.12 The DMO shall follow an approved Board/governance policy manual.

Essential Elements

- Copy of approved policy manual

- 1.13 The DMO's governing body or its parent organization shall conduct a formal (documented) and periodic self-evaluation process. This process shall include a review of individual and collective governing body performances.

Essential Elements

- Evidence the self-evaluation was accomplished or a template of the process

- 1.14 The DMO shall utilize a formal (documented) process for the orientation of new committee chairs.

Essential Elements

- Copy of orientation manual and/or table of contents

2.0 FINANCE

Mandatory Standards

- 2.1 The DMO has established and follows policies and procedures for the control of the financial operation of the organization.

Essential Elements

- Copy of the financial policies and procedures

- 2.2 A formal audit is conducted by an independent auditor (a certified public accountant - CPA or similar international credential) at least every two (2) years. *Guideline: Annual audits are preferable but an audit will only be required every two years in view of the potential financial ramifications of compliance with this standard.*

Essential Elements

- Most recent audit and management letter (if available) and DMO's response to management letter

- 2.3 The DMO maintains insurance coverage to cover the potential estimated liabilities of its operations and services.

Essential Elements

- Cover sheet from the insurance company summarizing all policies and amounts of coverage

- 2.4 The DMO's annual budget is linked to the goals of the strategic plan as approved by the DMO's governing body or its parent organization.

Essential Elements

- Explanation of this process or other written evidence of compliance

- 2.5 The DMO has appropriate avenues to report and document the misuse of funds to the proper level of management, volunteer leadership or outside source.

Essential Elements

- Policy and/or procedure

Voluntary Standards

- 2.6 The DMO adopts and utilizes the DMAI Uniform System of Accounting and Uniform Chart of Accounts.

Essential Elements

- Applicant Chart of Accounts incorporating DMAI Uniform System of Accounting and related accounts

- 2.7 The DMO maintains a reserve/contingency fund.

Essential Elements

- Reserve/contingency fund policy and statement of fund balance

- 2.8 The DMO develops and follows a capital equipment replacement policy.

Essential Elements

- Policy and/or plan

3.0 HUMAN RESOURCES

Mandatory Standards

- 3.1 The DMO complies with international/national, state/provincial and local/municipal government labor and employment laws.

Essential Elements

- Statement from applicant verifying compliance

- 3.2 The DMO conducts periodic formal performance reviews of all regular staff.

Essential Elements

- Performance review policy or procedure

- 3.3 The DMO offers a specified program of benefits for employees and these benefits are reviewed by management on a periodic basis.

Essential Elements

- List of current employees' benefits, policies and plans. A description of process utilized to periodically review and update them including the timeline frequency.

- 3.4 The DMO maintains a human resources (personnel) manual.
Guideline: All organizations that have employees should maintain a current written document specifying policies and procedures related to topics such as employment, leave, benefits, safety, ethics, general codes of conduct and similar or related topics. DMAP does not require any specific content to demonstrate compliance with this standard, but all applicants are expected to maintain a written manual dealing with human resource needs specific to their employees.

Essential Elements

- Copy of table of contents page (chapter headings) from current human resources (personnel) manual

- 3.5 The DMO maintains current job descriptions for all paid positions.

Essential Elements

- Samples of job descriptions representing management and support staff positions (regular and part-time) and a statement verifying the existence of current job descriptions for all paid positions

- 3.6 The DMO conducts an orientation program for all new employees.

Essential Elements

- Copy of orientation materials, a table of contents or other documentation of the process and tools used

- 3.7 The DMO has appropriate avenues for employees to report and document prohibited activities to proper levels of management, volunteer leadership or outside sources, i.e., discrimination, sexual harassment, hostile conduct or oppression against any employee for any reason. The DMO also has a policy that prohibits retaliation against any employee who files a complaint of such or participation in any investigation.

Essential Elements

- Copy of the policy and procedure incorporating these two concepts

Voluntary Standards

- 3.8 One (1) or more of the management staff has active (current) credentials in DMO management, association management, closely related disciplines and/or their particular profession.

Essential Elements

- List of management staff with current credentials and identification of these credentials

- 3.9 The DMO provides formal training and professional development for regular staff.

Essential Elements

- List of regular staff positions (by job title) and the number of hours of training and professional development provided for each position during the previous 12 months

Guideline: Compliance with this requirement will be determined by evaluating the average number of hours dedicated to training and development provided per permanent staff position. Dedicated training and development refers to formal training/education programs versus discussions of particular topics of interest at staff meetings.

- 3.10 The DMO conducts or participates in periodic compensation studies to determine the competitiveness of salaries/benefits.

Essential Elements

- Description of the process used to determine competitiveness of salaries/benefits

- 3.11 The DMO maintains employee relations and communications through regular department/staff meetings, employee recognition and activities.

Essential Elements

- Description of process/policy

4.0 TECHNOLOGY

Mandatory Standards

- 4.1 The DMO follows an information technology/network security policy.

Essential Elements

- Copy of policy and description of secure transactions offered
- Copy of current internet usage policy
- Copy of current email usage policy
- Statement of how data is backed up, the frequency of backups and where the data is stored

Voluntary Standards

4.2 The DMO has a technology plan.

Essential Elements

- Copy of technology plan

4.3 The DMO is developing an integrated database system.

Essential Elements

- Statement of the integration capabilities and status of the database system.
Guideline: An integrated database combines multiple forms of data that may reside at one or multiple sources and provides the user with a unified view of this information. For example, an integrated database could combine membership, marketing and research data in a format that facilitates combined search and report capabilities.

5.0 MARKETING

Mandatory Standards

5.1 The DMO has a comprehensive marketing plan that is consistent with its budget cycle. The marketing plan includes strategies and goals for key market segments.

Essential Elements

- Copy of section of plan that identifies strategies and goals for key market segments.

Guideline: The marketing plans submitted as evidence is one that is updated at least every three (3) years.

5.2 The DMO maintains a comprehensive Web site with content aligned with identified requirements of key market segments and a statement demonstrating the alignment of the content.

Essential Elements

- Identification of Web address and statement demonstrating the alignment of content with requirements of key market segments

- 5.3 The DMO provides updated collateral materials to meet the needs of visitors and/or meeting professional/travel trade.

Essential Elements

- Provision of written or digital samples including:
 - ◆ Visitor Guide and other materials
 - ◆ Can include samples of advertising

- 5.4 The DMO complies with applicable DMAI Performance Reporting Marketing definitions.

Guideline: The applicants can demonstrate compliance with this standard by submitting examples of monthly reports showing results on advertising or Internet activity utilizing the applicable DMAI Performance Reporting marketing definitions.

Essential Elements

- Copy of the applicant reports incorporating use of 2 or more DMAI Performance Reporting Marketing definitions

- 5.5 The DMO has a policy which offers its customers (e.g. convention planners, travel/tour trade) the option to opt out of communication (e.g. newsletters, news blasts, faxes) from the DMO.

Essential Element:

- Provide written policy and/or procedures and example of its use. (This would be a policy and/or procedure that ensures that this is followed throughout the DMOs operations.)

6.0 VISITOR SERVICES (INDIVIDUAL/LEISURE MARKET)

Guideline: These standards only apply if individual/leisure market services are offered by the DMO.

Mandatory Standards

- 6.1 The DMO plans and has procedures to respond to visitor inquiries in a timely manner.

Essential Elements

- Copy of written procedures for responding to visitor inquiries

- 6.2 The DMO provides trained staff with destination and customer service expertise to meet the needs of the leisure market.

Essential Elements

- Identification of one (1) or more staff serving the leisure market and their respective training/expertise

Voluntary Standards

6.3 The DMO offers visitor reservations services.

Essential Elements

- Written description of reservations services and/or name of company or product providing the service

6.4 The DMO offers access to staff and/or resources with multiple language speaking capabilities.

Essential Elements

- List of current language speaking staff and resources offered for the leisure market

6.5 The DMO has a Visitors Information Center(s).

Essential Elements

- Address(es) of Visitors Information Center(s) and a description of services offered

7.0 GROUP SERVICES

Guideline: These standards only apply if group services are offered by the DMO to meeting or leisure tour groups.

Mandatory Standards

7.1 The DMO offers meetings and/or convention services for meeting planners.

Essential Elements

- Description of meeting and/or convention services offered for meeting planners to include:
 - ◆ Menu of services offered
 - ◆ Lead distribution
 - ◆ Destination information
 - ◆ Site inspections facilitation based on customer need
 - ◆ Business referral services

- ◆ Attendance promotion
- ◆ Post event customer satisfaction survey of the customer experience for primary markets

7.2 The DMO provides trained staff with destination and customer service expertise to meet the needs of the group market.

Essential Elements

- List of staff serving the needs of the group market and their respective training/expertise

Voluntary Standards

7.3 The DMO offers housing capability.

Essential Elements

- Written description of reservations capability/services and/or name of company or product providing the service

7.4 The DMO offers access to staff and/or resources with multiple language speaking capabilities.

Essential Elements

- List of current language speaking staff and resources offered by the DMO for the group market

7.5 The DMO has or facilitates registration personnel.

Essential Elements

- Written description of registration services offered

8.0 SALES

Guideline: This section refers to all locations and all DMO departments engaged or involved in sales activities.

Mandatory Standards

8.1 The DMO has a comprehensive sales plan with specific goals and strategies that is updated periodically and is consistent with the budget cycle.

Essential Elements

- Copy of sales plan and description of goals and strategies

Guideline: The sales plan can be part of a marketing or other planning document prepared by the DMO.

- 8.2 The DMO has one (1) or more dedicated sales position(s).

Essential Elements

- Title and job description for dedicated sales position(s)

- 8.3 The DMO complies with applicable DMAI performance reporting definitions for convention sales and travel trade.

Guideline: Compliance can be demonstrated by including examples of lead reports, cancellation reports, lost business, bookings or other monthly reports utilizing the applicable DMAI Performance Reporting marketing definitions.

Essential Elements

- Copies of recent reports delineating use of 2 or more DMAI performance reporting definitions

- 8.4 The DMO has a policy(ies) for and facilitates site/fam inspections, sales (pre-sale) and convention services (post-sale).

Essential Elements

- Copy of policy(ies) and a sample itinerary

- 8.5 The DMO conducts and/or facilitates a proposal/bid fulfillment process at no charge to the client.

Essential Elements

- Sample letter or table of contents of bid document

- 8.6 The DMO maintains a qualified lead distribution and referral system and policy based on customer needs.

Essential Elements

- Sample of lead and written policy on the system

- 8.7 The DMO provides its sales staff continual destination product training opportunities.

Essential Elements

- Description of process and identification of sales staff destination training opportunities

- 8.8 The DMO has a policy which offers its convention or event, or travel/tour planners the ability to opt out of communication which leads to solicitation.

- **Essential Element:**
Provide written policy and example of its use. (This would be a policy and/or procedure that ensures that this is followed throughout the DMOs operations.)

Voluntary Standards

- 8.9 The DMO solicits continual group/event planner feedback on its sales process.

Essential Element

- Description of process used to collect customer feedback on the sales process

9.0 COMMUNICATIONS

Mandatory Standards

- 9.1 The DMO maintains an updated crisis communication plan.

Essential Element

- Copy of crisis communication plan

- 9.2 The DMO maintains an updated media/press kit.

Essential Elements

- Copy or description of contents of media/press kit

- 9.3 The DMO complies with applicable DMAI Performance Reporting Public Relations definitions.

Guideline: Compliance with this standard can be demonstrated by submitting examples of advertising equivalency, circulation or impression reports utilizing the applicable DMAI Performance Reporting definitions.

Essential Elements

- Copies of reports delineating use of 2 or more DMAI Performance Reporting definitions

- 9.4 The DMO has a documented communications strategy.

Guideline: A DMO communications strategy should include an internal (organization, community and members) component as well as an external (in synch with primary market segments) component, but applicants do not have to provide documented strategies in both of these areas to demonstrate compliance with this standard.

Essential Element

- Copy of the documented communications strategy

9.5 The DMO has a media protocol.

Essential Elements

- Copy of media protocol

10.0 MEMBERSHIP

Guideline: Compliance with these standards is only required for DMOs with a membership structure.

Mandatory Standards

- 10.1 The DMO establishes terms and conditions for membership and dues with specific categories.

Essential Elements

- Description of one or more of DMO membership categories

- 10.2 The DMO maintains a statement of membership benefits.

Essential Elements

- Published statement of membership benefits for one or more of membership categories

- 10.3 The DMO maintains a printed and/or electronic calendar of membership events.

Essential Elements

- Copy of calendar of events offered for the DMOs membership, e.g. networking events, membership mixers, annual meeting.

- 10.4 The DMO complies with applicable DMAI performance reporting membership definitions.

Guideline: Compliance with this standard can be demonstrated by submitting examples of the number of new, renewed and canceled members, utilizing the applicable DMAI performance reporting membership definitions.

Essential Elements

- Copy of applicant reports delineating use of 2 or more DMAI performance reporting membership definitions

- 10.5 The DMO solicits periodic member feedback.

Essential Elements

- Description of the process and frequency for soliciting member feedback

Voluntary Standards

- 10.6 The DMO has a written process for holding its membership to a standard of customer care.

Essential Elements

- Written a description of the policy or process. **Note, this refers to a standard of customer care that the DMO holds its membership to; not how the customer service or how the DMO handles its individual members.*

11.0 MANAGEMENT AND FACILITIES

Mandatory Standards

- 11.1 The DMO has a management structure that shows clear lines of reporting responsibility.

Essential Elements

- Organizational staffing chart listing all current regular positions and the reporting responsibility.

- 11.2 The DMO demonstrates commitment to a process of continuous improvement in the management of the organization.

Essential Elements

- Descriptions of examples of achieving continuous improvement within last 12 months and the results of the examples.

- 11.3 The DMO maintains a Business Continuity/Emergency Operations Plan specifying how the organization will respond to emergency situations.

Essential Elements

- Copy of the Business Continuity/Emergency Operations Plan

- 11.4 The DMO has a privacy policy covering personal information gathered from consumers.

Essential Elements

- Copy of privacy policy

Voluntary Standards

- 11.5 The DMO maintains a current policy and procedures manual specifying standard operating procedures for the various services and programs provided.

Essential Elements

- Cover and copy of table of contents from policy and procedures manual

11.6 The DMO utilizes specific policies and procedures for the management and supervision of contractors or outsourced service providers.
Guideline: This standard only applies to DMOs that currently use contractors or outsource services.

Essential Elements

- Copy of policies and procedures for the management and supervision of contractors or outsourced providers of services

11.7 The DMO has rules and operating procedures for any satellite (separate from the DMO physical headquarters) office(s) or visitor center(s).
Guideline: This standard only applies to DMOs that currently maintain satellite office(s) or visitor center(s) open to the public or customers.

Essential Elements

- Copy of operating procedures for any satellite DMO office(s) or Visitors Information Center(s) (VIC)

12.0 BRAND MANAGEMENT

Voluntary Standards

12.1 The DMO conducts a periodic brand assessment process.

Essential Elements

- Documentation of brand assessment process (date, scope, etc.)

12.2 The DMO demonstrates development of a brand strategy and a brand promise.

Essential Elements

- Copy of brand strategy and brand promise statement

13.0 DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Guideline: Destination development refers to infrastructure rather than the destination experience.

Voluntary Standards

13.1 The DMO leads or participates in a destination development process.

Essential Elements

Guideline: Including but not limited to assessing infrastructure, new business opportunities and/or community needs.

14.0 RESEARCH/MARKETING INTELLIGENCE

Mandatory Standards

14.1 The DMO demonstrates a commitment to customer research.

Essential Elements

- Evidence of customer research report (published or unpublished) including interpretation of findings.
- Evidence of a visitor tracking process, including a checklist.
- Evidence of inquiry tracking and analysis of tracking data.

Voluntary Standards

14.2 The DMO maintains a dedicated research line item in its annual budget.

Essential Elements

- Copy of the section of the budget research line item

14.3 The DMO uses standard business return on investment (ROI) approaches or DMAI's ROI form to quantify the financial impact on its local community for convention/group and/or leisure travel.

Essential Elements

- Copy/summary of findings and summary of process that quantifies the financial impact of the DMO on its local community for convention/group and/or leisure travel.

15.0 INNOVATION

Voluntary Standard

15.1 The DMO demonstrates recent (within the past two (2) years) evidence of innovative practice(s) that improves the operation and/or performance of the organization.

**Examples of innovative practices include organizational, community, economic development and/or sustainable tourism initiatives.*

Essential Elements

- Written description of innovative practice(s) and a discussion of the related impact(s)/benefit(s)

15.2 The DMO demonstrates recent evidence of innovative “green” practices in the organization and/or destination.

Essential Elements:

- Written description of innovative practices where the DMO has led the organization and/or destination in initiating programs that promote “green” practices.

Guideline: The practice provided as the essential element needs be different than the response to 15.1.

16.0 STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Mandatory Standards

16.1 The DMO demonstrates evidence of stakeholder relationships with critical community entities usually including, but not limited to:

- Government agency(ies)
- Business organization(s)/Chamber(s) of Commerce
- Economic development agency(ies)
- Airport authority(ies)
- Port authority(ies)
- Lodging association(s)
- Parks and recreation authority(ies)
- Media
- Community leadership organization(s)
- Convention center(s)
- Sports organization(s)
- Arts and cultural organization(s)
- Restaurant association(s)

Guideline: Stakeholder relationships with key organizations are critical for successful DMOs. These relationships can include serving on each other’s respective boards, participation in coalitions, involvement in joint ventures, financial support, endorsements, regular communication, etc. Applicants should provide a brief description of the nature of the relationships with their key stakeholder groups to demonstrate compliance with this standard.

Essential Elements

- Written statement describing the nature of relationships with multiple key stakeholders in the applicant’s community

- 16.2 The DMO demonstrates evidence of active involvement that advances the profession including but not limited to:
- Regional, state, national and international organizations.
 - Education institutions
 - Industry associations

Essential Elements:

- A written statement discussing how the DMO actively participates in professional and industry associations. For example, participation in committees, boards, data sharing, education facilitation and mentoring.