



<h2 style="margin: 0;">State of Ohio IT Policy</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">Moratorium on the Use of        Advertisements, Endorsements,        And Sponsorships on        State-Controlled Web sites</p>	<b>NO:</b> <span style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">ITP-F.35</span>
	<b>Effective:</b> <span style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">10/23/2000</span>
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### 1.0 Purpose

As the state makes services and information more available via the **Internet**, new challenges emerge. One of these challenges is advertising on state-controlled Web sites or creating partnerships with advertising companies to host an agency's website. From a funding aspect, this opportunity looks very attractive. However, there are numerous legal and policy issues that surface when considering advertising on state-controlled Web sites. Until the issues surrounding web **advertisements** on state-controlled Web sites have been fully studied and presented to the Governor's Council on Electronic Commerce for review, agencies shall not allow advertisements, **sponsorships** or **endorsements** on state-controlled Web sites including vendor-hosted Web sites. The details of this moratorium are stated below in the Policy section.

### 2.0 Scope

Pursuant to Ohio IT Policy ITP-A.1, "Authority of the State Chief Information Officer to Establish Policy Regarding the Acquisition and Use of Computer and Telecommunications Products and Services," this state policy is applicable to every organized body, office, or agency established by the laws of the state for the exercise of any function of state government except for those specifically exempted.

The scope of this information technology policy includes state computer and telecommunications systems and the employees, contractors, temporary personnel and other agents of the state who use and administer such systems.

### 3.0 Background

The Internet has become one of the state's most important resources for providing easy access to information, both internally and to our citizens and customers. There are many challenges such as funding of web-based initiatives, appropriate use of the Internet, security and privacy that need to be addressed as the state moves toward providing an increasing number of services on the Internet. One such challenge is the issue of placing advertisements on state-controlled Web sites in order to ease funding pressures. However, there are complex legal and policy issues that arise regarding advertising on state-controlled Web sites. Because of their importance, the chief information officer in

consultation with the Governor's Council on Electronic Commerce must carefully research and consider these issues in order for the state to progress in a uniform manner in this area since the actions of individual agencies may set a precedence that impacts the entire state. Examples of these issues include:

- 3.1 Legal implications such as the legal authority under Ohio law including the Ohio Constitutional Lending Aid and Credit Clause, the potential for legal liability and U.S. First Amendment implications for agency control and content guidelines;
- 3.2 Potential privacy abuses when a user accesses web advertisements – since advertisers may track the visitors linking to their site, there is a loss of a level of privacy control, and while some privacy requirements could be placed on advertisers, those requirements need to be clearly and comprehensively defined;
- 3.3 Lack of accepted public-sector standards and guidelines regarding "best practices" in web advertising – few states, if any, have adopted policies on advertising on state Web sites.
- 3.4 Impact on performance – without clear standards, there is a danger that advertisements will degrade website performance or create confusing Web sites, and as such, those standards need to be comprehensively defined;
- 3.5 Impact on public perception and customer confidence – website visitors may perceive that the state service or information delivered is controlled by or associated with the advertiser either directly or indirectly;
- 3.6 Appearance of endorsement by the state of Ohio – potential consequences are the appearance of favoritism, public or media scrutiny of a state agency promoting a certain businesses, products, etc., as well as potentially implicating liability issues;
- 3.7 Control of downstream navigation and content – with the ability of Web sites to re-direct their visitors to other Web sites, the state may lose control of providing a means for visitors to return to the state website, and, furthermore, there is a danger that the visitors may very quickly be directed to problematic Web sites;
- 3.8 Impact on revenue allocation – this new funding source needs to be carefully examined for its impact on funding overall, including the implications to agencies receiving federal funds; and
- 3.9 Risk of litigation – apart from any of the legal implications described above, web advertisements may entail a high-risk of litigation, the cost of which must be considered.

#### **4.0 References**

- 4.1 Ohio IT Policy ITP-A.1, "Authority of the State Chief Information Officer to Establish Policy Regarding the Acquisition and Use of Computer and Telecommunications Products and Services," defines the authority of the state CIO to establish State of Ohio IT policies as they relate to state agencies' acquisition and use of information technology, including, but not limited to, hardware, software, technology services and security.

- 4.2 A glossary of terms found in this policy is located in Section 8.0 – Definitions. The first occurrence of a defined term is in ***bold italics***.

## 5.0 Policy

Until the issues surrounding web advertisements on state-controlled Web sites have been fully studied and presented to the Governor’s Council on Electronic Commerce for review, agencies shall not allow advertisements, sponsorships or endorsements on state-controlled Web sites including vendor-hosted Web sites. This moratorium is effective immediately and will remain in effect until the Office of Information Technology (OIT) in consultation with the Governor’s Council on Electronic Commerce issues a final statewide policy. Agencies with explicit statutory authority regarding advertisements may request a waiver of this moratorium through the Administrator for Statewide IT Policy, at [State.ITPolicy.Manager@oit.ohio.gov](mailto:State.ITPolicy.Manager@oit.ohio.gov).

### 5.1 Acknowledgements

State agencies may include ***acknowledgements*** on their Web sites as long as the acknowledgement is:

- 5.1.1 Made discreetly and subtly;
- 5.1.2 Not linked to any external Web sites; and
- 5.1.3 Accompanied by a disclaimer that the acknowledgement does not constitute endorsement.

### 5.2 Directories

A web directory is a listing of external Web sites that might serve as a source of additional information for website visitors. An agency who offers a web directory with links to external Web sites on a state-controlled website, must define a class of entities that may be listed in the directory, allow anyone within that class to be linked, disclose on the website the criteria and procedures for requesting a link and disclaim endorsement. The criteria that the agency uses for determining if an entity to be linked via a directory falls within the class must be approved by the agency’s director and then submitted to the OIT along with the director’s approval. The criteria should be sent to the Administrator for Statewide IT Policy, at [State.ITPolicy.Manager@oit.ohio.gov](mailto:State.ITPolicy.Manager@oit.ohio.gov).

### 5.3 Required Software

Whenever an agency website requires the use of particular software that the website visitor may need to download (e.g., .PDF formatted files require the Adobe Acrobat Reader software), the link to the download site may be included. The link should be accompanied by a statement that the particular software is required.

## 6.0 Procedures

None.

## 7.0 Revision History

Date	Description of Change
10/23/2000	Original Policy. This Policy replaces all previously released memoranda regarding this topic.
10/23/2005	Scheduled policy review.

## 8.0 Definitions

- 8.1 Acknowledgement. A statement, which may include a logo, graphic or text, that identifies but does not promote an individual business, person or any other non-governmental entity as the source of work, material, equipment or services for a project.
- 8.2 Advertisements. A logo, graphic, text, sound, video or any other means of promoting the commercial, political or other activities of an individual business, person or non-governmental entity.
- 8.3 Endorsement. A statement of approval of a product, service or individual business, person or any other non-governmental entity.
- 8.4 Internet. A worldwide system of computer networks - a network of networks - in which computer users can get information and access services from other computers. The Internet is generally considered to be public, un-trusted and outside the boundary of the state of Ohio enterprise network.
- 8.5 Sponsorship. A logo, graphic, text, sound, video, or any other means of recognizing an individual business, person or any other non-governmental entity in exchange for underwriting a project.

## 9.0 Related Resources

None.

## 10.0 Inquiries

Direct inquiries about this policy to:

Statewide IT Policy  
Investment and Governance Division  
Ohio Office of Information Technology  
30 E. Broad Street, 39<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Telephone: 614-644-9352  
Facsimile: 614-644-9152  
E-mail: [State.ITPolicy.Manager@oit.ohio.gov](mailto:State.ITPolicy.Manager@oit.ohio.gov)

Ohio IT Policy may be found on the Internet at: [www.ohio.gov/itp](http://www.ohio.gov/itp).

**11.0 Attachments**

None.