

## Department of Commerce Implementation Plan Plain Writing Act of 2010

[Plain Writing Act of 2010](#) requires agencies to write documents for the public that are easy to understand and use. We must use plain language in any document that—

- is necessary for obtaining any federal government benefit or service or filing taxes;
- provides information about any federal government benefit or service; or
- explains to the public how to comply with a requirement that the federal government administers or enforces.

This plan describes how the Department of Commerce will continue to comply with the Plain Writing Act. We're committed to open government, transparency, and customer service—which we can't provide if the public can't easily understand what we say. Plain language is central to improving customer service and putting our customers first.

We invite public comment on our plan. Please send comments to [plainlanguage@doc.gov](mailto:plainlanguage@doc.gov).

Because we're dedicated to the letter *and* the spirit of the Plain Writing Act, the Commerce Department's efforts will go beyond compliance. We will use existing resources and support the plain language community, particularly the [Plain Language Information and Action Network \(PLAIN\)](#).

### **I. Designate senior agency official for plain writing and coordinators**

The Act requires us to “designate 1 or more agency points-of-contact to receive and respond to public input on (i) agency implementation of this Act; and (ii) the agency reports required under section 5.”

- Jim Hock, Director of the Office of Public Affairs, is the senior agency official for plain writing. He will ensure the plan's implementation. Contact him at [plainlanguage@doc.gov](mailto:plainlanguage@doc.gov).
- Mike Kruger is the Plain Language launcher, coordinating the plain language implementation program. Contact him at 202-482-2556 or [plainlanguage@doc.gov](mailto:plainlanguage@doc.gov).

### **II. Describe the agency communications released by your office that follow the Plain Writing guidelines**

We write all new or substantially revised relevant documents—including web pages—in plain language. As recommended by the Office of Management and Budget, we will follow the [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#) and this [plain language checklist](#).

We will strive to produce most documents in plain writing, including those not covered by the Plain Writing Act, while considering the types of documents and how many people use them.

### **III. Inform agency staff of the Plain Writing Act's requirements**

The law states that agencies must “communicate the requirements of this Act to the employees of the agency”. To comply, we are planning to do, or have already done, the following:

- Post information at [www.doc.gov/plainlanguage](http://www.doc.gov/plainlanguage), linked from Commerce's home page
- Post information on the agency's intranet
- Send an email message to all employees from the Secretary or other Commerce leader
- Brief the senior management team
- Brief the chiefs of staffs and the training managers of all Commerce bureaus

### **IV. Train staff**

We will continue to encourage Commerce bureaus to require plain language training for their staff. PLAIN trainers or private vendors have taught workshops within the bureaus and the Secretary's office. Workshops and refresher courses are available upon request.

### **V. Continue compliance and sustain change**

Our strategy ensures that we're complying with the Act. We will

- Continuously train current employees
- Train new employees at new employee orientations
- Encourage our contractors to take plain language training
- Create new forms, policies, and procedures in plain language
- Review existing documents for plain language
- Rewrite the most visited pages on [Commerce.gov](http://Commerce.gov) in plain language and measure performance, by monitoring feedback emails

Changing our writing culture will require hard work; employees will need to acquire new skills and abandon ingrained writing habits. With training, senior-level encouragement, and customer service feedback, we expect to meet our performance goals.

### **VI. Create department's plain writing website**

Commerce's plain language webpage is [www.commerce.gov/plain-language](http://www.commerce.gov/plain-language). Contact us at [plainlanguage@doc.gov](mailto:plainlanguage@doc.gov) if you have trouble understanding any Commerce web pages or documents. We will respond to you within three business days.

### **VII. Evaluate customer success after implementing plain language plan**

We're exploring the best way to measure our plain language progress. We'll revise this document to include our specific performance goals. Possibilities include—

- Publish before-and-after examples to show benefits of plain language improvements
- Initiate new feedback/rating feature on [www.commerce.gov](http://www.commerce.gov) and regularly publish results and agency response