Agenda Item 11

June 17, 2015

ITEM NAME: CalPERS Website Demonstration

PROGRAM: Enterprise

ITEM TYPE: Information

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Website Usability Improvement Initiative is intended to examine the usability of the CalPERS website (www.calpers.ca.gov). Using various research techniques and extensive input from more than 1,000 members, employers, and stakeholders, staff has developed a new and improved website that is designed with our users' needs and motivations in mind. The new site will provide quick and easy access to important information, improved search capabilities, and improved organization to help customers find what they want, when they want it.

There will be a live demonstration of the new website at the Board meeting.

STRATEGIC PLAN

This information item supports Strategic Plan Goal B – Cultivate a high-performing, risk-intelligent and innovative organization. Improvements in the usability of our website will strengthen CalPERS position as a leader in customer service delivery.

BACKGROUND

Staff provided the Finance & Administration Committee with updates on the progress of the Website Usability Improvement Initiative at their meetings in September 2014 and February 2015.

The project team, which consists of key members of the Information Technology Services Branch and the Office of Public Affairs, worked in collaboration with pagemasters and subject matter experts representing every CalPERS program area in developing the new website.

The Website Usability Improvement process began with the internal launch of the pilot site in July 2014 that included an invitation for input from CalPERS employees. What followed was a very deliberate and thorough review of content by staff, combined with input from more than 1,000 members, retirees, and employers through focus groups, usability testing, and interviews. In addition, our Web and User Experience teams have been meeting regularly for nearly two years with subject matter experts and pagemasters from all CalPERS program areas.

The new website will offer a new approach to presenting information, resulting in less content delivered in a more effective way. The site has been reduced from 1,300 pages to 500 pages. Although the volume of information has diminished, necessary information of importance to users has been retained.

The new CalPERS website will launch to the public on Monday, June 29, 2015.

The goals of the new website are:
- Provide simplified navigation and quick access to important information
- Improve search capability
- Enable easier access and improve user experience on all devices
- Offer multiple pathways to the most requested tasks
- Align with the CalPERS brand

ANALYSIS
Guided by the concept of developing a website designed with our users' needs and motivations in mind, staff conducted extensive user testing and research to get feedback on the layout and features of the new website, understand if the labels are intuitive, and determine whether there are any pain points for users. Staff involved users at every step of the design process, and as a result, the site is focused on the users and the task they are trying to perform.

Outdated pages have been removed, content is written in plain language, and pages are easier to scan. In addition, the design has incorporated creative ways to present information, such as banners, accordions, features, tabs, applications, and videos.

Highlights of the new CalPERS website include:
- A homepage that provides immediate access to major topic areas, news, events, videos, and social media
- Quick access to tools and resources users want the most
- A new search engine powered by Google that provides more accurate and relevant results
- A design that adapts to different types of devices – smartphones, tablets, and personal computers (Currently, about 20 percent of our website traffic comes from smartphones and tablets, and this number is increasing)

Research indicates that online users want to access information or complete a task quickly and easily. They scan through content and look for key words. To ensure that content on our new website is relevant, we have adopted an archive policy that, as a general rule, removes content that is older than 3-5 years. However, content will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. For instance, Governance and Investments each have special, specific and unique challenges, which are carefully being addressed.

The project team is currently conducting a comprehensive review of the website to ensure accessibility requirements are met, all content is accounted for, and all elements of the site are functioning as designed.

BUDGET AND FISCAL IMPACTS
The Information Technology Services Branch Fiscal Year 2014-15 budget for developing the new website was $500,000. The budget covered one-time expenses for the design, build and deployment of the new website. These expenses included software, server hardware, consulting services, as well as staff training.

The Office of Public Affairs (PAOF) Fiscal Year 2014-15 projected expenses for developing the new website were $86,000. The expenses were covered by existing PAOF Web and Visual Design vendor contracts, and included strategic design and content consultation, brand alignment, user interface design production, Web content editing services, and knowledge transfer on content optimization and development.

The large majority of work performed to develop the new CalPERS website was done with CalPERS staff.

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