



Washington State

ENVIRONMENTAL AND LAND USE HEARINGS OFFICE

Pollution Control Hearings Board
Shorelines Hearings Board
Growth Management Hearings Board

**IT Strategic Plan
IT Accessibility Plan
January 2023-September 2024**

Introduction

The Environmental and Land Use Hearings Office (ELUHO) houses three independent, quasi-judicial boards: the Pollution Control Hearings Board (PCHB), the Shorelines Hearings Board (SHB), and the Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB). The Boards provide an independent review of state and local decisions regarding environmental regulations and land use planning. ELUHO serves Washington State and its citizens as the final independent administrative authority on state environmental and land use planning laws under the Boards' jurisdiction.

This Information Technology (IT) strategic plan describes the work efforts planned from January 2023 – September 2024. These efforts support and enhance the ELUHO Strategic Plan, comply with the Washington State Office of Chief Information Officer's (OCIO) requirements, and support the Governor's Results Washington Goal 5: Efficient, effective, and accountable Government. ELUHO's IT strategic plan also supports several state IT strategic goals.

In addition, ELUHO's IT accessibility plan is a component of the IT strategic plan. The IT accessibility plan meets the requirement of OCIO policy and underscores ELUHO's commitment to providing IT access to individuals with disabilities.

Summary

ELUHO is a small agency with 16 full time employees. ELUHO does not have in-house IT support and relies on Washington Technology Solutions (WaTech), through the Small Agency IT Support Service, to provide all IT services. With WaTech's support, ELUHO's focus is on replacing legacy systems and outdated work processes with modern case management technology and hybrid work technology. ELUHO will also train employees on utilization of the new case management system and hybrid technology to maximize benefits across varying technical abilities.

New Case Management System

In 2018, OCIO and Department of Enterprise Services (DES) completed a cursory review of ELUHO's current Case Management System (CMS) and web site. OCIO and DES recommended a technical review and Project Initiation Assessment in preparation for improving or replacing existing websites and CMS, which have a number of limitations. Simultaneously, constituents and users of the CMS brought the limitations and problems to the attention of the 2019 Washington State Legislature, which subsequently passed Substitute Senate Bill 5151, and directed ELUHO to fix its current system.

In July 2019, ELUHO hired a consultant to perform a feasibility study and subsequently entered into several contracts to design, build, and launch a new CMS by July 2023. One objective is to implement a system that allows easy queries of Board cases and makes Board orders and other case documents easily available to the public and internal users. By including features such as advanced search techniques and a map of active cases, the project will improve the agency's accessibility and overall transparency. Another objective is to eliminate redundant work functions and increase staff productivity. A final objective is to reduce overall risk by managing all case records in one location.

The project supports Statewide IT Strategic Plan 2021-2025 Goal #2 - Accountable IT Management by aligning portfolio to statewide architecture and reducing technical debt. It may also support Statewide IT Strategic Plan 2021-2025 Goal #5 - Security and Privacy because the new CMS will be designed to be compliant with state IT security policies.

Hybrid Hearing Technology

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ELUHO has transitioned to a hybrid workforce that provides flexible remote and in-office opportunities for employees. In addition, ELUHO's key service line – conducting administrative hearing processes – is also shifting to a hybrid model. Before the pandemic, hearings conducted by the two environmental boards (PCHB and SHB) were conducted in-person at the hearing room in Tumwater. Hearings by the GMHB were conducted in-person at various locations around the state, such as in city and county buildings. In 2020, hearings shifted online in response to the pandemic. Hearings continue to be fully remote because ELUHO does not currently have the technology to provide a hybrid option.

Many hearing participants, including parties, attorneys, and witnesses prefer the remote option because it eliminates travel and reduces costs. Other attendees, including unrepresented appellants with limited access to technology, prefer to participate in-person. As the state gets closer to full re-opening there is increased pressure to provide hybrid hearing options.

The key needs for hybrid hearing technology are:

- Remote and in-person participants have a clear and balanced visual and audible presence;
- All attendees have Internet connectivity to fully participate;
- The system is easy-to-use and accessible to all;
- Allows in person and remote observers;
- Evidence can be presented and viewed by all;
- Meets IT security and other policies;
- Purchases fit within our budget;
- Technology supports hearings at ELUHO's Tumwater office;
- Portable technology supports hybrid hearings at other locations.

Hybrid hearings support Statewide IT Strategic Plan 2021-2025 Goal #3 – IT Workforce by supporting a diverse and resilient workforce and improving support for remote work.

Staff Training

Transitioning to a new case management system and to delivering hybrid hearings will be a big change for ELUHO. ELUHO employees have a wide range of technological aptitudes and abilities and are comfortable with current businesses practices that use email and paper to manage cases, calendars, etc. Robust staff training, with an emphasis on change management and including training resources and materials, is important to ensure the new systems are fully utilized.

Training employees supports Statewide IT Strategic Plan 2021-2025 Goal #3 – IT Workforce by developing a workforce training plan for cloud adoption.

Goals and Strategies

Goals

Goal 1: New Case Management System – Launch a new CMS that 1) makes environmental and land use Board cases transparent, accessible, and easy to track and 2) improves workflows and communication by centralizing case documents, automating processes, and performing case-related tasks in one place.

Goal 2: Hybrid Hearing Technology – Obtain technology to support hybrid hearings for all ELUHO Boards.

Goal 3: Staff Training – Provide training to all ELUHO employees on using the new CMS and hybrid hearing technology.

Strategies

1. Design, build, and launch the new case management system by July 1, 2023
2. Produce training resources, such as user manuals, for employee roles to perform tasks in the CMS
3. Provide live training to all ELUHO employees on using the CMS to perform job duties
4. Identify options for long-term, good-quality hybrid hearing technology
5. Develop funding strategy for purchasing hybrid hearing technology
6. Develop short-term strategy for conducting hybrid hearings

7. Purchase long-term, good-quality hybrid hearing technology that meets ELUHO's unique needs
8. Provide training to Board members and judges on presiding over hybrid hearings using new technology

IT Accessibility Plan

Accessibility Statement

ELUHO is committed to making all of its technology covered in Washington State Technology Policy 188 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, when applicable, is accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities through conformance with state and federal standards.

Section 508 and Policy 188

Section 508 is a federal law that requires agencies to provide individuals with disabilities equal access to electronic information and data comparable to those who do not have disabilities, unless an undue burden would be imposed on the agency. The Section 508 standards are the technical requirements and criteria that are used to measure conformance within this law. More information on Section 508 and the technical standards can be found at www.section508.gov.

Washington State's Policy 188 establishes the expectation for state agencies that people with disabilities have access to and use of information and data and be provided access to the same services and content that is available to persons without disabilities unless providing direct access is not possible due to technical or legal limitations. The full policy can be found at <http://ocio.wa.gov/policy/accessibility>.

New Case Management System

ELUHO's new Case Management System (CMS) uses the Salesforce and Microsoft SharePoint Online platforms, which allow internal users, case parties, and the general public to access case documents and information through standard web browsers. Individuals can search for information and documents online and can download documents from the CMS. Documents accessible to the public are stored in Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat formats.

The CMS platform conforms to the Minimum Accessibility Standards of OCIO Policy 188. Many of the accessibility features available to users, however, are dependent on the web browser that the user chooses to use when accessing the CMS.

Adobe Acrobat Files

Some of the documents on ELUHO's web site are in HTML or ASCII (plain text) formats. These formats are generally accessible to people who use screen readers. We also have a large number of documents in Adobe Acrobat® Portable Document Format (PDF).

PDF format is used to preserve the content and layout of our hard copy publications. Publications in PDF can only be viewed and printed using the Adobe Acrobat Reader®, version 3.0 or higher. You can [download and get help using the Acrobat Reader](#) at the Adobe Systems, Inc. site. The downloadable Acrobat Reader software is available at no cost from Adobe.

People using screen-reading devices generally are unable to read documents directly in PDF format, unless they have an accessibility plug-in installed on their system along with the Adobe Acrobat Reader. This plug-in is available at no cost from Adobe. Adobe also has online tools that will convert PDF files to HTML on request. To get the plug-in and latest news about Adobe's accessibility tools and services, visit the [Access Adobe web site](#).

Microsoft PowerPoint, Word, and Excel Files

You can view ELUHO documents that are in Microsoft PowerPoint format if you have any version of PowerPoint installed on your computer. For those who don't have the software, the Microsoft Corporation offers a free PowerPoint file viewer. You can download and get help using the PowerPoint viewer at the Microsoft Download Center.

You can view ELUHO documents in Microsoft Word format if you have Word, version 6.0 or higher, installed on your computer. Word documents can also be viewed with many other word processing software programs. Additionally, Microsoft offers a free Word file viewer that you can download from the [Microsoft Download Center](#).

You can view ELUHO documents in Microsoft Excel format if you don't have Excel installed on your computer. You can install the [Microsoft Excel mobile app](#) or store documents on OneDrive or Dropbox, from which Excel Online can open the files in your browser.

Zoom Meetings

ELUHO Boards sometimes use Zoom to host Board meetings, case conferences, and hearings. Zoom offers captioning, transcription, and video options as well as screen reader support, keyboard shortcuts, and other accessibility settings. You can find out more about Zoom accessibility options at the [Zoom Accessibility Page](#).

Accessibility Coordinator

If you have any questions regarding accessibility, please contact ELUHO's Accessibility Coordinator, Jamie Merly, at Jamie.Merly@eluhw.wa.gov or (360) 485-1282.