



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 FY 2025-27

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 in the Fiscal Year 2025-27 biennium. 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. In addition, the plan 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 19 full time employees. ELUHO does not have in-house IT support and relies on WaTech to provide all IT services through the Small Agency IT Support Service. With WaTech's support, ELUHO's focus is on replacing legacy systems and outdated work processes with modern case management technology and hybrid work technology. As ELUHO's workforce possesses varying technical abilities, ELUHO will train employees to realize the maximum benefit of the new case management system and hybrid technology. In addition, as security risks increase and technology advances, ELUHO will work closely with partners to understand and minimize risks, and to provide IT security training to staff.

Case Management System

In 2023, ELUHO launched an electronic case management system (CMS), replacing an outdated legacy system. The CMS allows parties to ELUHO board cases to file documents electronically. By including features such as advanced search techniques and a map of active cases, the CMS improves transparency by making it easy for the public to search for board cases and documents. It also eliminates redundant work functions and increases staff productivity, and it reduces overall risk by maintaining all case records in one location.

Now that the CMS is launched and users are comfortable performing its core functions, ELUHO will work with a vendor to implement other functionality of the system to work towards maximizing its full benefit.

The CMS supports all four State IT Strategic Goals - Goal #1 – Create a Government Experience that Leaves No Community Behind; Goal #2 – Better Data, Better Decisions, Better Government, Better Washington; Goal #3 – Innovative Technology Solutions Create a Better Washington; Goal #4 – Transform How We Work. Best Workforce Ever.

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 were conducted in-person at the on-site hearing room in Tumwater while hearings by the Growth Management Hearings Board were conducted in-person at various locations around the state, such as city and county buildings. In 2020, hearings shifted online in response to the pandemic.

ELUHO boards now offer case parties the option of in-person, remote, or hybrid (mixed in-person and remote) hearings. 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.

In response, ELUHO purchased audio/visual equipment that meets the following business needs:

- Remote and in-person participants have a clear and balanced visual and audio presence;
- 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;
- Technology supports hearings at ELUHO's Tumwater office;
- Portable technology supports hybrid hearings at other locations.

ELUHO will continue to offer hybrid hearings to case parties and become more adept and conducting hybrid hearings.

Hybrid hearings support the State IT Strategic Goal #1 - Create a Government Experience that Leaves No Community Behind; and Goal #3 – Innovative Technology Solutions Create a Better Washington.

Staff Training

Using the new case management system and delivering hybrid hearings are big changes for ELUHO. Staff training continues to be a key focus to ensuring the success of the new systems.

Staff training supports State IT Strategic Goal #4 – Transform How We Work. Best Workforce Ever.

Security and Risk Management

IT security threats and advances in technology are on the rise. ELUHO will continue to work closely with WaTech to offer IT security training to staff and establish policies and protocols that minimize risk to the state.

Security and risk management supports State IT Strategic Goal #2 – Better Data, Better Decisions, Better Government, Better Washington; and Goal #4 – Transform How We Work. Best Workforce Ever.

Seamless Office Relocation

The lease for ELUHO’s headquarters building in Tumwater expires in August 2025 and the agency will relocate to new building in Thurston County. ELUHO will strive to provide a seamless experience to internal and external users throughout the relocation transition.

A seamless office relocation supports State IT Strategic Goal #1 - Create a Government Experience that Leaves No Community Behind.

Goals and Strategies

Goals

Goal 1: Case Management System – Implement new functionality of the CMS to increase its benefit.

Goal 2: Hybrid Hearing Technology – Offer hybrid hearings to case parties and become more adept at conducting hybrid hearings in a variety of locations.

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

Goal 4: Security and Risk Management - Work closely with WaTech to offer IT security awareness and training to staff and establish policies and protocols that minimize risk to the state.

Goal 5: Seamless Office Relocation - Provide a seamless experience to internal and external users throughout the relocation to a new office building.

Strategies

1. Implement calendar and template functionality in the CMS.
2. Encourage boards to offer a hybrid hearing option as a matter of course for hearings.
3. Produce training resources, such as how-to videos, for employee to use new CMS functionality.
4. Provide training to employees on using the CMS and hearing audio/visual equipment.
5. Provide IT security training beyond the mandatory annual training.
6. Partner with WaTech and statewide IT groups to track and understand potential risks, and to develop strategies to manage risks from advancing technology, such as generative AI.

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>.

Case Management System

ELUHO's 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, 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@eluhwa.gov or (360) 485-1282. Alternatively, contact ELUHO's front desk at eluhwa@eluhwa.gov or (360) 664-9160.