



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of
Communications

Visual
Communications
Center

April 2004

USDA Visual Information Standards

Print, Exhibit, and Presentation Media Specifications and Uses

A USDA Visual Management Guide

Introduction

USDA Visual Information

Establishing standards for USDA visual information complements the Department's visual communication mission by assisting audience accessibility, enhancing identity, and bringing cost effectiveness to the production of information materials.

Audience accessibility is increased with specifications that are based upon the findings of research into readability, legibility, and other reading and perception norms. The Department's **identity** is enhanced when information materials are recognizable by their consistent appearance. **Cost effectiveness** is obtained by gaining economy of scale with visual information production. Preestablished formats eliminate the need to spend production time determining the form of presentation. Their use eliminates "reinventing the wheel" every time a message is developed, freeing writers and communication specialists to concentrate on content.

These specifications are mandatory for the following USDA information materials, but are not limited and may be expanded as program missions dictate:

- All internal, administrative materials for government personnel relating to the operation of the Department or the execution of its programs.
- Scientific and technical information directed to the agricultural community.
- All other information materials not designed for specific targeted audiences or special communication products. Targeted audiences may include those for whom USDA develops products meant to persuade (recruitment pamphlets), motivate (risk management), bring about behavior modification (nutrition and food safety), develop interest in unwilling and low-level readers, and assist those with special reading requirements, such as the visually impaired. Special communication products include exhibits and other materials that conform to Americans With Disabilities Act guidelines.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

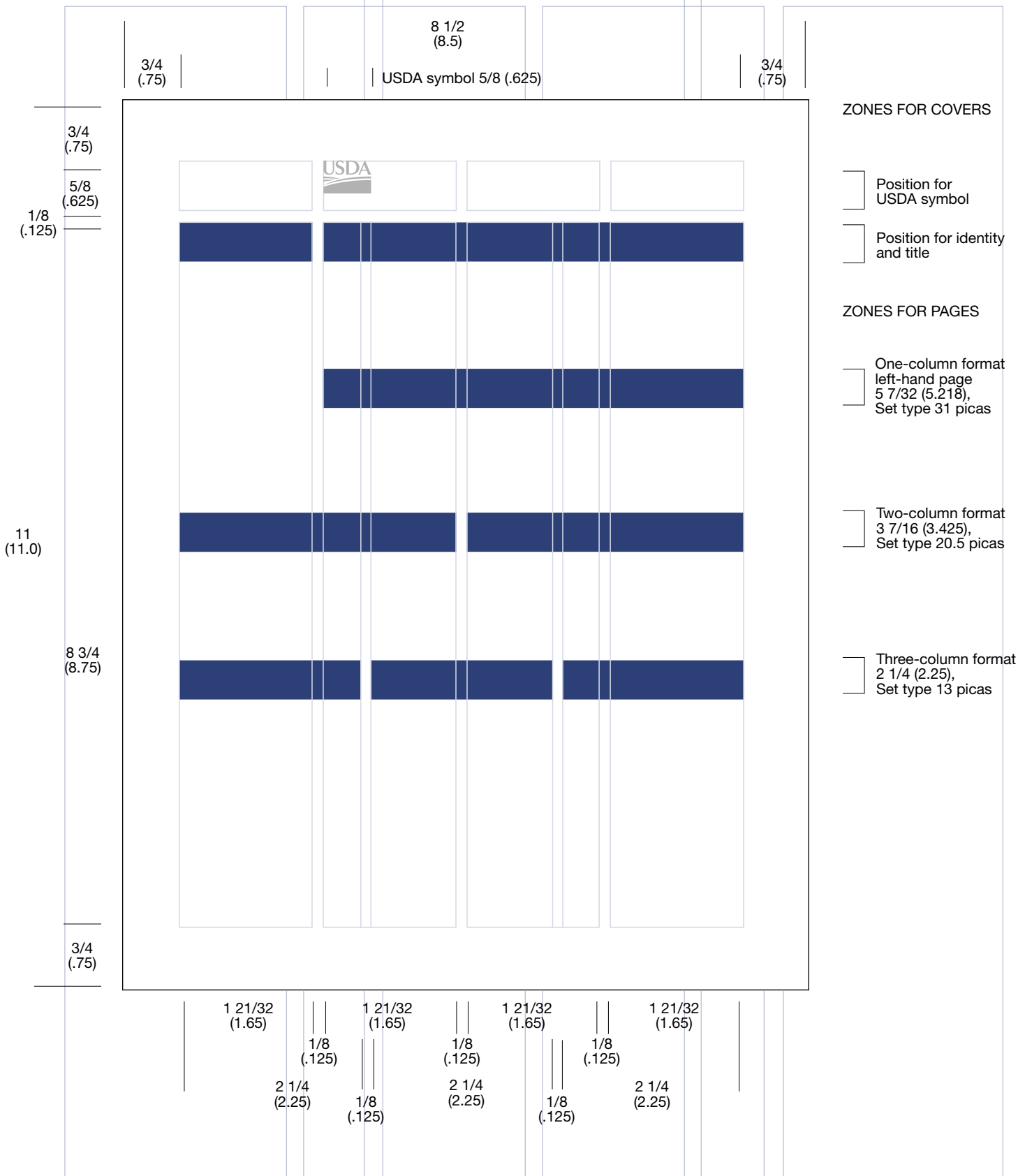
USDA is committed to making its information materials accessible to all USDA customers and employees.

(1) The authority for mandatory specifications is DR 1470-1 which is available on the USDA web site at: www.usda.gov/directives/files/dr/DR1470-001.htm. Other mandatory guides produced by the Office of Communications are: *USDA Visual Information Standards*, Generic Standards, Summer 2002; *Office of Communications Guidelines*, *Style Guidelines for Media Materials*, January 2002; *USDA Stationery Systems, Specifications and Uses*, December 1998; *The USDA Symbol, Its Purpose and Use*, August 1996. Certain compatible standards and style guides for identities and signage have also been officially established for agencies and programs by the USDA Office of Communications Visual Communications Center. The above guides are available for download at: www.usda.gov/agency/oc/design/vis_man_guide.html.

Contents

Print Materials	4
8.5" x 11" Print Examples and Specifications	4
5.5 x 8.5 Print Examples and Specifications	6
4 x 9 Print Examples and Specifications	8
Large Print Examples and Specifications	10
Web Sites	11
Exhibit media	12
Presentation materials	14
Glossary	16

Print/Specifications, 8.5 x 11



Print/Examples, 5.5 x 8.5

Specifications

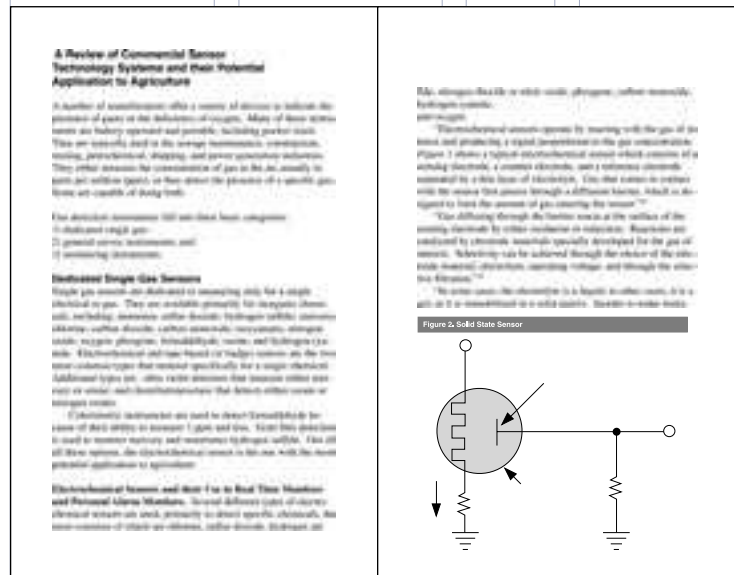
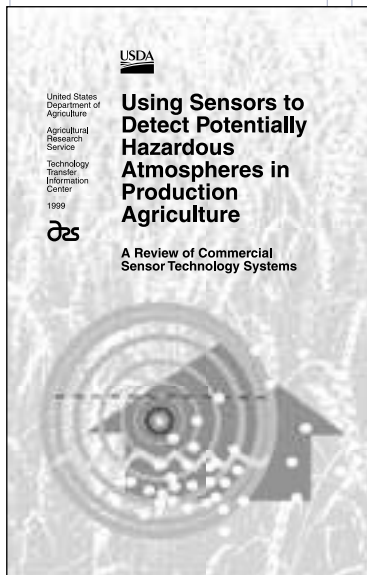
Margins. Maintain 5/8" (.625) all around.

Covers. All type in Helvetica. Title—set 24/24 bold, FLRR (flush left, rag right), initial caps. Subtitle—set 14/14 bold and regular, FLRR, line for line. Identity—set 9/9 regular, FLRR, line for line.

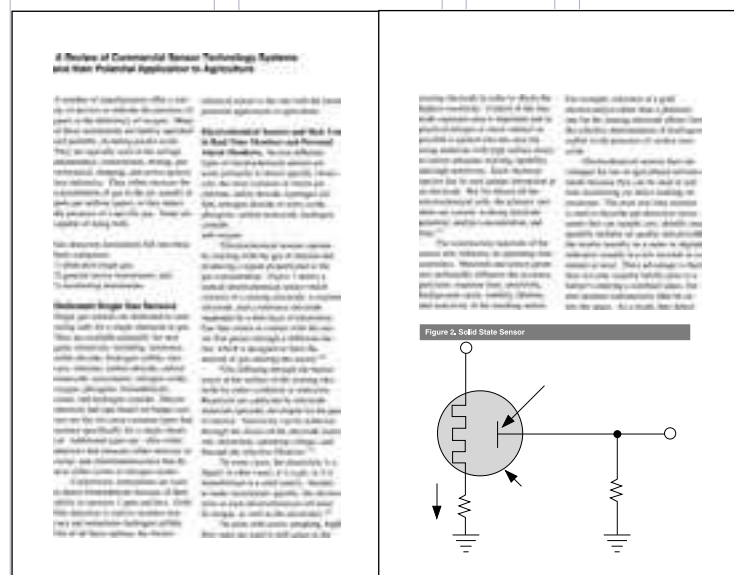
Symbols. Place the Department symbol as shown on the specification sheet. When applicable, place agency, program, and affiliated symbols one line space below the identity strip as shown in the example. All symbols should be the same size as the Department symbol.

One-column format. Main head Helvetica bold, 12/12, FLRR. Text Times regular, 11/11, FLRR by 26 picas. Subheads in Helvetica bold.

Two-column format. Main head Helvetica bold, 10/10, FLRR. Text 9/11 Times regular, FLRR by 12.5 picas. Subheads in Helvetica bold.

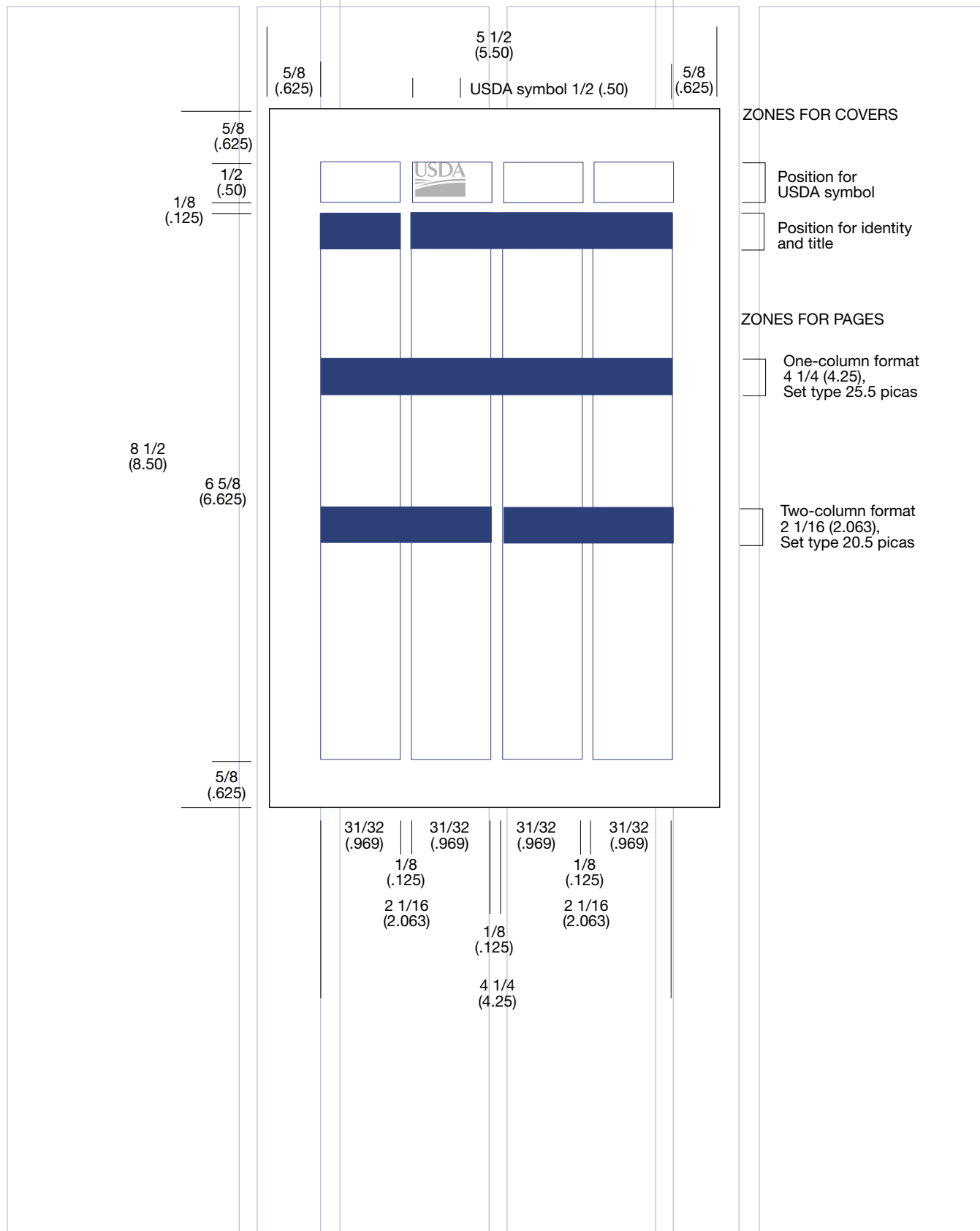


One-Column Format



Two-Column Format

Print/Specifications, 5.5 x 8.5



Print/Examples, 4 x 9

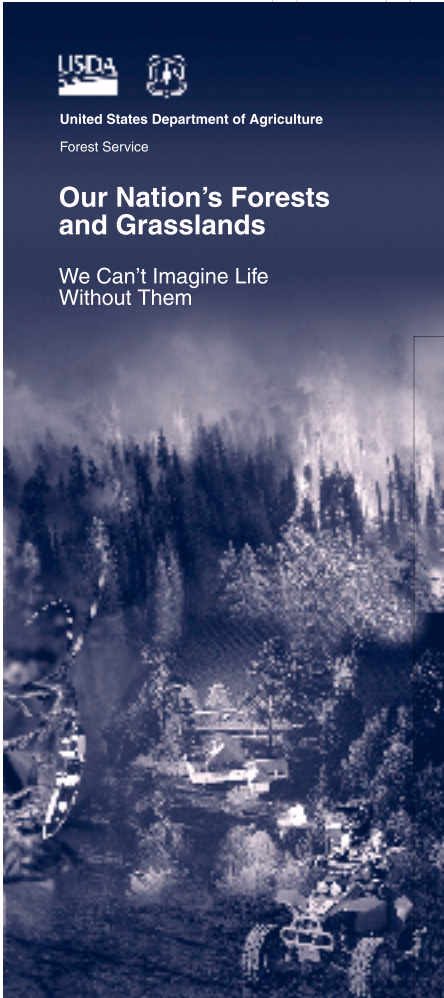
Specifications

Margins. Maintain 1/2" (.50) all around.

Covers. All type in Helvetica. Title—set 18/18 bold, FLRR, initial caps. Subtitle—set 14/14 (as needed), regular, FLRR, line for line. Identity—set 9/9, one line space between lines, regular, FLRR, line for line.

Symbols. Place the Department symbol as shown on the specification sheet. When applicable, place agency, program, and affiliated symbols 1/2" (.50) to the right of the USDA symbol as shown in the example. All symbols should be the same size.

One-column format. All type in Helvetica. Set main head 12/12, bold, FLRR. Text regular, 9/12, FLRR by 18 picas. Subheads in bold.



4" x 9" Publications, of 8 or more pages, can be bound as a book. If only 8 or fewer pages are needed, the publication can be folded from a single sheet (multiple-panel fold format).

Two-page spread in one-column format

Fire and Fuels

- Two-thirds of America's clean water comes from sources in the national forests. More than 3,000 communities rely on these sources for drinking and household uses.
- Many rural communities live off the bounty of the forests as sources of employment; food; materials for manufacturing, such as paper; building supplies; medicines; and other benefits.

Healthy forests are important to a healthy nation. And generally, citizens of a healthy nation enjoy a higher quality of life. But every day, there are threats, mainly human-caused, to the health of these lands.

Keeping the forests and grasslands healthy is challenging and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service takes it seriously. The four major challenges as identified by the USDA Forest Service are fire and fuels, invasive species, loss of open space, and unmanaged recreation.

Fire plays an integral part in forest health, but too much fire can be destructive. Debris, such as fallen leaves, dead branches, twigs, and dry vegetation, accumulates on forest floors. These are fuels that feed forest fires. Too much fuel combined with drought conditions and other unfavorable weather patterns can turn small fires into large fires. Fires burn more quickly and intensely in forests where trees have been weakened by insects, pests, and diseases; where too many trees are too close together and where smaller trees can carry flames from the forest floor into the branches of bigger trees.

There are things we can do
Prescribed burning and thinning can reduce the intensity of a wildfire by reducing fuels in the forests. These efforts decrease the risk of fire to forests and to people. The Forest Service works with State agencies, local governments, and nonprofit organizations to slow the loss of open space. This cooperation helps to protect healthy ecosystems and livable



Print/Specifications, 4 x 9			
	1/2 (.50) 1/2 (.50) 1/8 (.125) 9 (9.0) 7 3/8 (7.375) 1/5 (.50)	1/2 (.50) 4 (4.00) USDA symbol 1/2 (.50) 1/2 (.50) USDA APHIS	ZONES FOR COVERS Position for symbols Position for identity and title ZONES FOR PAGES One-column format 3 (3.00), Set type 18 picas

Large Print Format

USDA is committed to compliance with Section 508 requirements. Section 508 stipulates that all public information must be accessible to persons with disabilities. This may require the availability of alternative formats including "Large Print." The USDA TARGET Center is the contact point and resource center for converting USDA information and documents into alternative formats including Braille, large print, video description, diskette, and audiotape formats. More information is available from their web site at: www.usda.gov/oo/target/

Large Print format
"Large Print" is a highly used alternative printed document format. Large Print can be used for individuals with a low vision impairment. Low vision prohibits the use of font sizes (9-12 point) which are thought of as standard for the majority of readers. Although font size can be enlarged to almost any size, people with low vision generally require sizes between 18 and 24 point for comfortable reading. When charts, graphs, or tables are part of the publication, the text in them should also be at least 18 points.

Avoid placing colored text on a colored background where there is insufficient brightness contrast between the two to be easily read by persons with low vision.

A Sans-serif typeface is preferred by people with low-vision. Set titles in Helvetica black, 36/38, FLRR. Set subheads in Helvetica black, 20/30, FLRR. Set text in Helvetica regular, 20/30, FLRR. The line length for text is 36 picas.

Having several copies of large print documents at seminars, workshops, and training sessions is recommended by the USDA TARGET Center. Attendees should be asked if they will require large print copies when they register for events. While the TARGET Center is the USDA resource center for converting documents, It is the responsibility of the agency conducting the event to convert informational documents into large print, if requested.

8.5" x 11" Large Print Format

1 1/4" (1.250) | 6" (6.000) | 1 1/4" (1.250)

Detail with Large Print text at actual size -->

Large Print format
"Large Print" is a document format for individuals with low vision prohibited

Technology at Work

Assessments

The TARGET Center Staff is available to conduct worksite assessments for people with disabilities with a focus on assistive technology. Group and individual ergonomic assessments are available to all USDA employees.



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Web Site Format

USDA's newly redesigned web site places emphasis on customer needs rather than agency organization. This approach applies to all USDA agencies and offices. The complete new guidelines and standards for USDA Web Presence are available online at: www.egov.usda.gov/intranet/WebPresence/USDA_Web_StyleGuide_v1.0.pdf. Please contact your agency webmaster for a login and password.

The USDA User Interface (UI) Style Guide defines the guidelines and standards for look, feel, and navigation that will promote consistency while improving the overall user experience. The guide will help reinforce and protect the integrity of the USDA brand. Designers and developers should use this guide to understand how to apply these standards to all web pages created for USDA.

The guide provides detailed information and templates for all levels of Web pages. The templates included provide designers and developers with examples of how to display commonly used information. Specifications for color and typography that meet department-wide standards are included. Also, provided are guidelines and advice on preparing content to maximize the user's ability to locate, understand, and use information.

Web Page Structure

Most pages of the USDA Web site have content that can be structured within the following six sections: the Masthead, Top Navigation Bar, Left Navigation Column, Right Navigation Column, Footer and Content Area. The basic components of these areas will allow you to build additional pages within the Web site.

The Masthead is the main branding area of the USDA Web site and will appear on every page. The Branding Area is the area at the top of the masthead where the USDA logo and typography appear. The size and placement of the Branding Area elements and the Top Navigation Bar cannot be altered.

The Left Navigation Column appears on every page of the Web site. There are four main ways to find information on the USDA Web site. The user can Search for specific information. My USDA can be used to customize information specific to the user. Browse by Audience will direct users based on audience type. Browse by Subject will direct users by common topics of interest. These components always appear in the same place on every page.

The screenshot displays the USDA website layout with the following labeled components:

- Masthead:** Located at the top, featuring the USDA logo and the text "United States Department of Agriculture". Below it is a banner with the text "USDA leads the Federal anti-hunger effort with its Food Stamp, School Lunch, School Breakfast, and the WIC Programs".
- Top Navigation bar:** A horizontal bar containing links: Home, About USDA, Newsroom, Agencies & Offices, Help, Contact Us, and En Español.
- Left Navigation Column:** A vertical sidebar on the left containing a search box, a "Browse by Subject" menu with categories like Agriculture, Education and Outreach, Food and Nutrition, Laws and Regulations, Marketing and Trade, Natural Resources and Environment, Rural and Community Development, Research and Science, Travel and Information, and USDA Employee Services.
- Right Navigation Column:** A vertical sidebar on the right containing sections: "I Want To..." with links like "Make USDA Customer Statement", "Find a form", "Find weather and climate conditions", "Find community market reports", "Find current food needs", and "Apply for food stamps"; "Announcements and Events" with links like "USDA and USAID Export Food Aid Conference VI April 28-29, 2004", "Agriculture as a Producer and Consumer of Energy", and "Ag Outlook Forum 2004"; and a "Customer Statement" link.
- Footer:** Located at the bottom of the page, containing links: "USDA Accessibility Statement", "Privacy Policy", "Information Statement", "Information Quality", "Policies", and "White House".

Exhibit media/ Examples

Specifications

Measures: Maintain an identity zone that is approximately 1/6 of the exhibit height.

Symbols: Place the Department symbol on the left side of the zone, one symbol width from the edge. Place agency or other symbols to the right of the USDA symbol in the manner shown on the specifications sheet.

Typography: Set title and heads in Helvetica, write a 1-line title. For a 10' trade show exhibit, the capital letters in the title should be 4" to 5" high.

Content: Maintain the most important information in the top 1/3 of the exhibit space, the optimum viewing area.

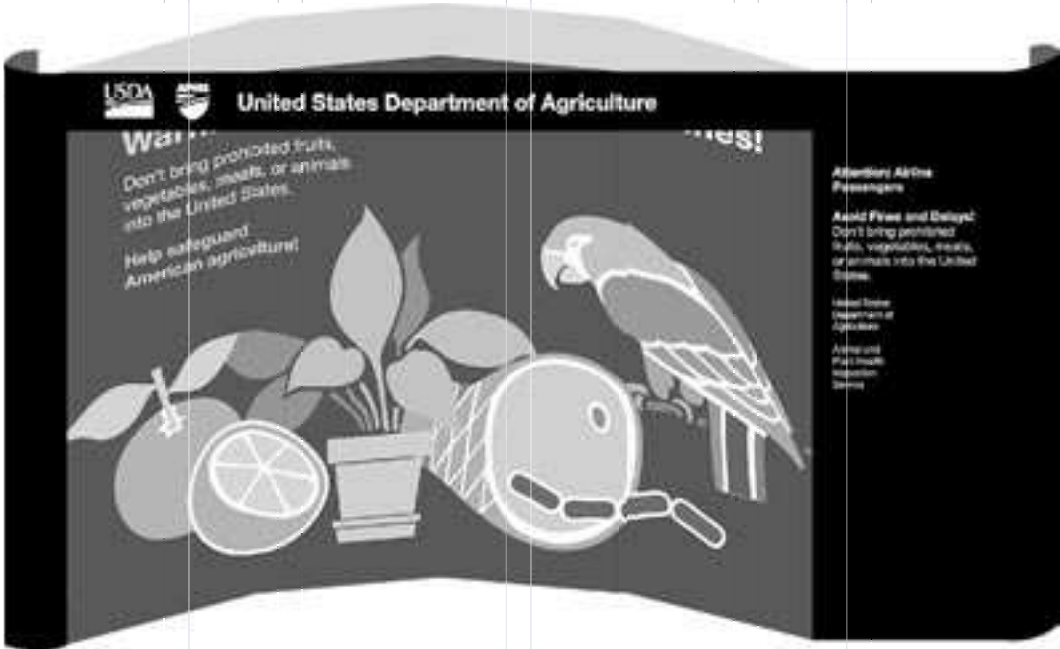
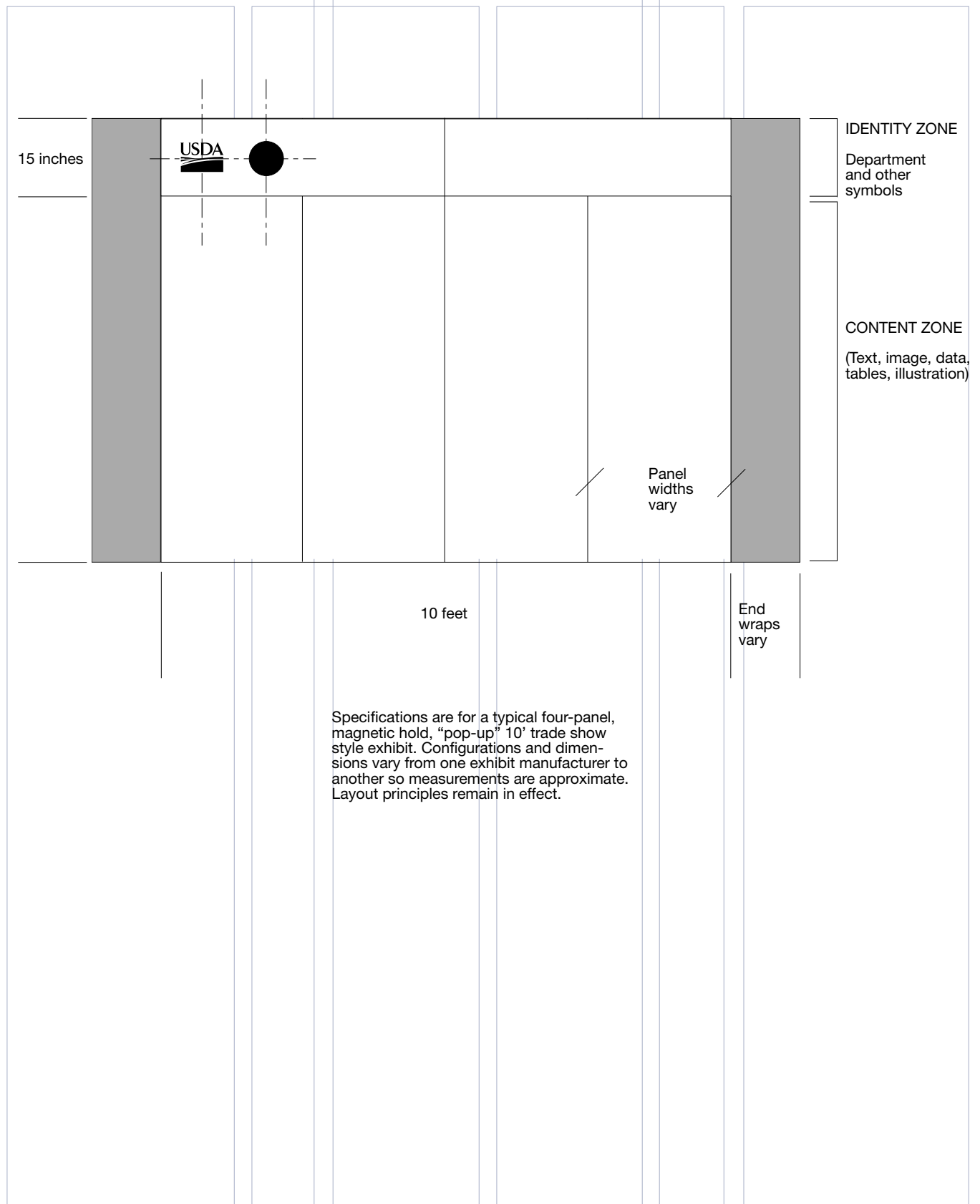


Exhibit media/ Specifications



Presentation materials/ Example

Today's presentation media are most often digital. Overhead projections and 35mm slides have given way to computer generated presentations using *PowerPoint*, *PDF* files, and HTML web browsers. Other more sophisticated software (e.g., Macromedia *Flash* and *Director*) are used for animated presentations.

Projections vary in size and proportion depending on the output device. Wide-screen Plasma dimensions are much different than more traditional CRT monitors. This makes consistent specification of font size and margins very difficult. Therefore, percentages or ratios will be used instead of actual numeric dimensions.

PowerPoint slide

Margins. Allow about 10% of the image area for margins. This is equivalent to about a 1" margin on a typical page. If the presentation is being shown over broadcast media, increase the margins to 15% to allow for cutoff variations from screen to screen.

Symbol. The USDA symbol is placed flush right and centered vertically in the identity zone as shown on the specification sheet. Agency and other symbols are placed to the right as shown in the example.

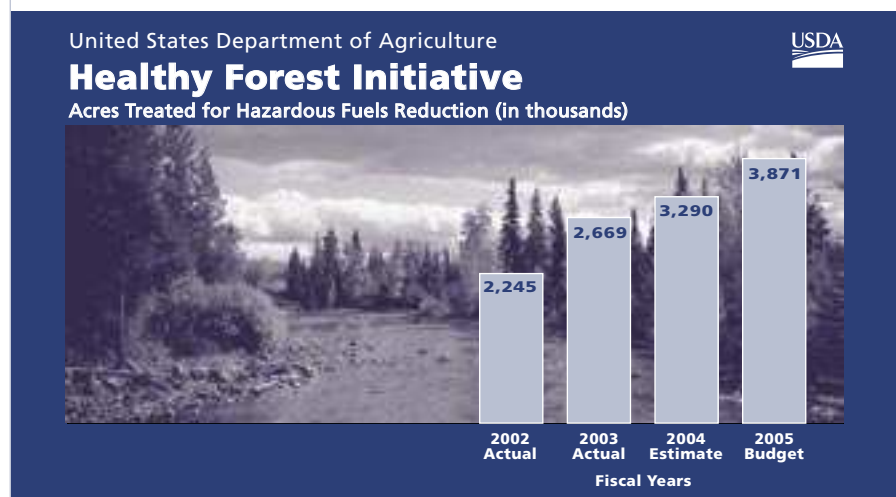
Color and Contrast. Unlike printed material, text on projected images is easier to read if it is a light color (preferably white) on a dark muted background.

Identity Text. Set type in Helvetica, upper and lower case (avoid using all caps) at about half the size of the body text. Align the identity text with the USDA and agency logo.

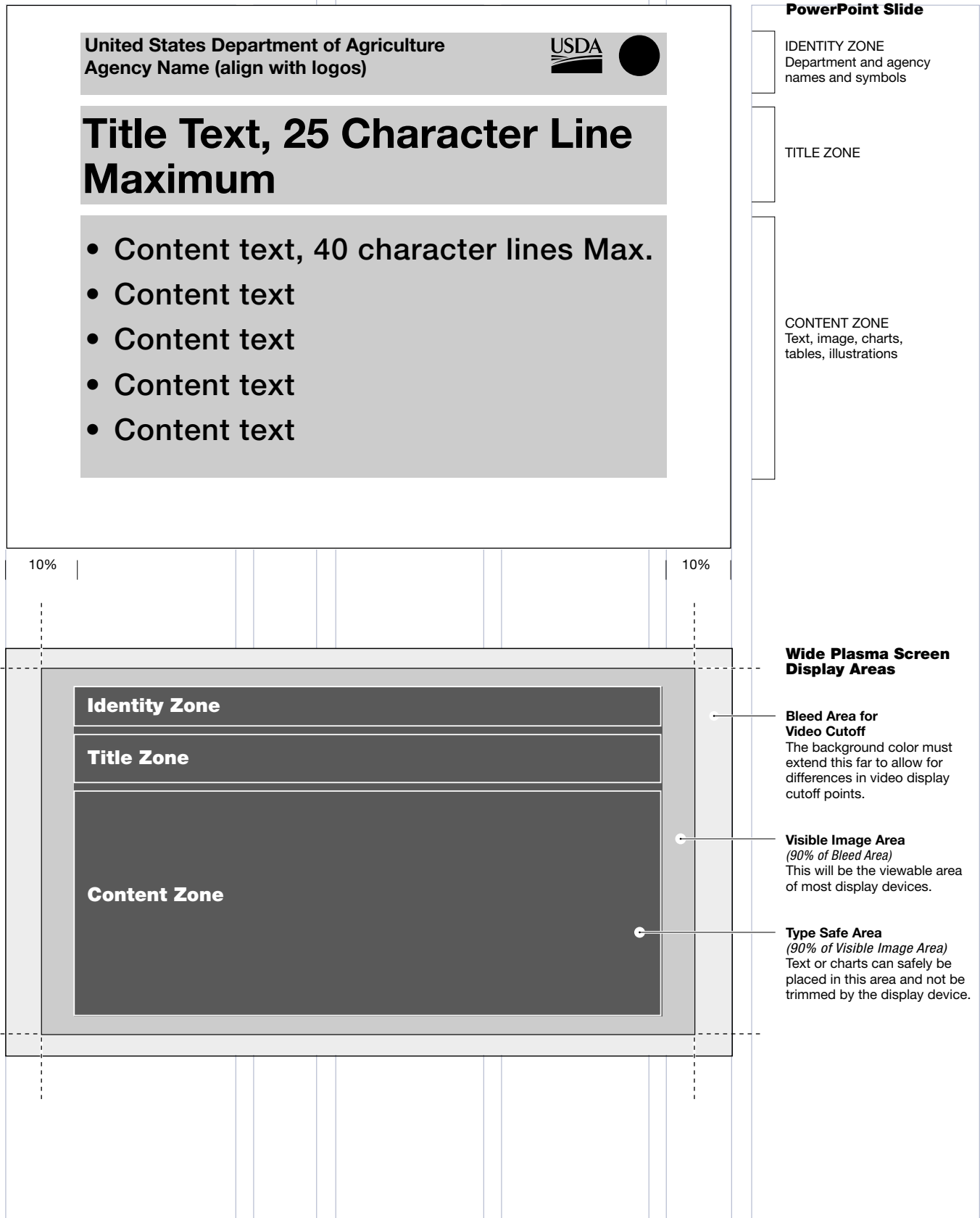
Title. Set in Helvetica Bold, upper and lower case, with about a 25 character line length.

Content Text. Avoid using all caps. Set in Helvetica Regular with about a 40 character line length. Keep the amount of text to a minimum and avoid extraneous words. For good readability and audience focus, bulleted items are better than narrative text. Maintain a maximum of 7 bulleted items per presentation image.

Briefing chart for
Plasma screen display



Presentation materials/ Specifications



Glossary

Measurement Systems

Layout specifications for USDA print materials are given in inches. Measurements are given in fractions as well as decimals.

Typographic specifications (for the size of type, the space between lines, rules, line length, and the like) are given in the **Pica System**, the printing industry standard. There are 12 points to a pica and 6 picas to an inch. Therefore, 72 points equal 1 inch.

A typical typographic specification would read:

“set Helvetica regular, 8/9 x 13”

This means:

Helvetica = name of the typeface;

8 = size of the typeface in points;

9 = leading, the space between lines in points; and

x 13 = length of the line (the width of the column) in picas.

The smallest increment used for type specifications in this guide is 6 points.

The size of ruled lines, “rules,” is shown in both decimal inches and points.

Grid Systems

A grid is an underlying structure for the organized placement of elements on a page. Grids are a manner of dividing a blank space (page, screen, or exhibit panel). They are used to establish zones for visual information elements and as a tool to quickly layout pages in a consistent manner.

Standard Typefaces

All type in the USDA visual management system that is used for titles, heads, and identity is specified in the typeface Helvetica. The typeface equivalents to Helvetica on PC and Macintosh platforms are named *Arial* and *Helvetica Neue*. While the preferred type for text material is *Times Roman* or *New Times Roman*, many other typefaces are suitable for mainstream text. In general, the typeface should be clean and legible with few embellishments. Good examples with excellent readability are *Garamond*, *Caslon*, and *Frutiger*.