

STATE SERVICES COMMISSION
Te Komihana O Ngā Tari Kāwanatanga



RSS - RDF Site Summary

Starter Kit

State Services Commission

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Preface

Scope

This document describes the processes and procedures required for a government agency to start supplying news summaries to New Zealand Government Portal. Technical details of XML and RSS 1.0 are provided in supporting documents, which are referenced here.

Audience

This document is intended for government agency staff representatives who are involved with web site administration and internet publishing. Some familiarity with agency web maintenance and content management is assumed.

Usage

Use this document to plan your agencies adoption of RSS for submitting your news items to NZ Government Portal.

Prerequisites

Background Knowledge

Before you start generating news feeds for the NZ Government Portal, you need to:

- Make sure you are generally aware of XML (Extensible Markup Language), RDF (Resource Description Framework), and RSS (RDF Site Summary).
- Have an agency internet Web site up and running with established procedures for generating content and updating pages.
- Make sure you are familiar with the SSC E-government documents *RDF Site Summary for Publishing Government News* (<http://www.e-government.govt.nz/docs/rss-proposal-200408/index.html>) and *A Standard for the Publication of Government News Summaries*. (<http://www.e.govt.nz/docs/rss-v-1-0-final/index.html>)
- Make sure you have a means of generating RSS news summary items in well formed XML, either by using a third-party web management tool or by implementing scripts developed for your web server.
- Be familiar with the RSS Aggregator on the NZ Government Portal web site. You should be able to see the aggregated RSS news feeds on <http://news.portal.govt.nz/news.rss> if you have a browser that displays XML.

Skills Required

To implement the RSS news feed, you need to either have the skills, or have access to people with skills to:

- Generate news items in HTML
- Publish news items by updating your agency web site
- Reliably generate news item summaries in XML to strict specifications
- Regularly update the news summary page on your agency web site
- Liaise with SSC site administration staff and respond to issues that may arise.

Software Required

Depending on what procedures, processes and facilities you already have for managing your Web site, you may not require any new software to implement RSS and start supplying news feed.

If your agency already uses a third-party content management or web publishing package, you will probably investigate using that tool to produce your RSS news feed. In some cases you may need to acquire an additional module to augment the software you currently use.

If your agency uses scripting tools to generate HTML pages and maintain your web site, you will probably need to invest time and effort in developing and testing new scripts to produce your RSS news feed.

Manual coding and updating of your RSS news feed is not recommended. The XML standard format is quite demanding.

Registration Process

The process for registering a news feed to NZ Government Portal is:

- 1** Develop a test RSS news feed according to the standards and specifications. Publish this on your Web site when you are sure that you have established your news feed generation procedures. (You don't need to have links to the RSS news feed on the normal web pages.)

See the XML Structure Checklist and News Feed Structure Checklist (on page 5).

- 2** Send a notification, by e-mail, to SSC of the news feed including the URL of the test RSS news feed file. SSC will acknowledge the notification.
- 3** SSC runs a test fetch on the test news feed and validates the format, structure and content. Any problems or concerns are reported back for action.
- 4** When satisfied, SSC notifies you that the test news feed is accepted.
- 5** Your agency informs SSC when they wish to start providing regular news feeds to the NZ Government Portal with contact details for the person or team providing technical support.

See the News Feed Procedures Checklist (on page 6).

- 6** SSC install the news feed details on the NZ Government Portal aggregator as from the agreed date.

Checklists

Use the following checklists to validate your RSS XML structure, news feed structure, and news feed procedures.

XML Structure Checklist

You should check that your RSS news feed is valid XML:

- The news feed begins with a valid XML prolog.
- The feed is coded as UTF-8. All characters with an ASCII value higher than 127 are encoded as double byte sequences.
- All XML elements are properly nested. There are no overlapping elements.
- The XML elements are correct in case sensitivity. All elements are specified in lower case.
- All attribute values are specified with double-quotes.
- All elements have closing tags.
- The RSS news feed has been checked by an independent tool or utility for valid XML.

News Feed Structure Checklist

You should check the following conditions in your RSS news feed before you submit the test feed to SSC for validation:

- The feed is formatted as RDF 1.0.
- The RDF document has a RDF header.
- The namespace URLs are specified in the RDF header.
- There is only one channel specification following the RDF header.
- The channel specification contains a *title*.
- The channel specification contains a *link* element which is a URL to the textual version of the news.
- The channel specification contains an *items* element
- The *items* element contains one or more news items.
- Each news *item* element contains:
 - A *title* element
 - A *link* element
 - A *nzgls:date.valid* element
 - A unique *nzgls:identifier* element
 - A *nzgls:type.agency* element
- The start date and end date in the *nzgls:date.valid* element is specified in the format YYYY-MM-DD or YYYY-MM-DDTHH:MM:SS+1200. For example, 2005-05-29T13:00:00+1200.
- The *nzgls:identifier* is specified in the format <date>-<sequence>-<agency> and contains only the characters 0 to 9, a to z, A to Z, +, -, or _. For example, 20050529-001-Agency.
- If the item contains a description field, it consists of pure text without any HTML or XML markup.
- The feed concludes with a RDF closing statement.

News Feed Procedures Checklist

Before informing SSC that you are ready for them to install the feed on the aggregator, you should ensure that:

- SSC have formally advised that the test feed is correct.
- You have decided on the start date and daily frequency for the news aggregation.
- You have policies and procedures for generating approved titles and descriptions on news items submitted to news aggregation.
- You have processes and procedures to ensure that each news item receives a unique *nzgls.identifier* element.
- You have decided on and implemented a news feed strategy. For example you will hold items in the feed for at least 7 days or you will hold only 10 items in your feed at any given time.
- You have policies and procedures for future dated news items.
- You have policies and procedures to change the expiry date of a news item if you need to withdraw it.
- You have staff assigned who can be contacted and can respond to issues that arise.

Resources

The following references are relevant to implementing RSS:

- RDF Site Summary for Publishing Government News, August 2004. E-government Unit, State Services Commission. <http://www.e-government.govt.nz/docs/rss-proposal-200408/index.html>
- A Standard for the Publication of Government News Summaries. 7 July 2003, E-government Unit, State Services Commission. <http://www.e.govt.nz/docs/rss-v-1-0-final/index.html>
- RDF Site Summary 1.0 Specification. <http://web.resource.org/rss/1.0/spec/>
- XML, <http://www.w3.org/xml/>
- Dublin Core. <http://purl.org/rss/1.0/modules/dc>
- Syndication. <http://purl.org/rss/1.0/modules/syndication>.
- NZGLS Standard. <http://www.nzgls.govt.nz/standard/>
- Unicode UTF-8. <http://www.unicode.org/>