

Executive Summary

This report is a compilation of our findings from our review and audit of educational courses provided by Client A. In initial interviews, Client A's representative expressed specific concerns about their courses, which our team prioritized assessing in our audit. We divided these concerns into three major categories: Content, Consistency, and Functionality.

During our audit, we found that course content was generally satisfactory and mostly relevant to Client A's client base (local government employees). However, there were consistency and functionality concerns that may need to be addressed. We found that accessibility, layout consistency and adherence to the style guide, and interactive features (functionality) are the more pressing concerns.

Based on what we found in the content audit, we recommend that Client A implement a maintenance process to ensure content accuracy, a system or process to consider learner feedback when needed, and further accessibility standards. We also recommend a standardization of certain elements such as quiz format, layout format, video player, and introduction slides.

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Introduction

Our team was given access to Client A’s course content in the learning management system (LMS) so that we could audit and provide recommendations for a content strategy. This report will mostly detail our audit findings and some general recommendations. More detailed content strategy recommendations will come in future documents.

We will first explain our method and process for assessing Client A’s content, including an explanation of our rating system. We will then review our assessment findings in greater detail. Lastly, we will discuss potential competitors to identify Client A’s place in the market.

Client A’s ability to maintain their content may allow them to reach audiences they have not been able to before and make them more competitive with other organizations that provide local government employee training. Ideally, Client A should have an established content strategy and review process so their content can accurately represent the organization’s values and standards.

Methods

Our team sampled 39 of the available courses, which equated to approximately 1200 minutes of learning material.

In initial meetings, Client A’s representative expressed 14 specific concerns about their courses. Our team organized these concerns into three main categories: content, consistency, and functionality. Below is a table explaining our assessment categories:

Audit/Assessment Categories		
Content	Consistency	Functionality
Grammar quality Tone quality Accuracy of content DEI compliance Multimedia quality Audience relevance	Adherence to style guide/sheet Layout consistency Catalog consistency	Operational links Interactive features Video player Audio Quality Accessibility

In the assessment spreadsheet, there are additional columns within the three main categories. This was to further assess specific elements (links, for example) and to ensure as many concerns were checked as possible. In other words, the subcategories listed here are broad overviews of topics we assessed in this audit. In the audit spreadsheet, some of these subcategories may be broken down further into several columns that ask specific questions, but in this report, we will review them in the above format.

Before auditing, we established a rating system to use for assessing certain aspects of Client A’s courses. The rating system is as follows:

Rating System	Description
Excellent	Exceptional, no further action required.
Acceptable	Meets requirements, may require some changes.
Needs Improvement	Poor, requires many changes/fixes.

Some categories could not be assessed using this rating system and are only marked in the audit spreadsheet as yes/no questions.

Under the “Actions” column, we have made recommendations for what Client A should do with a specific course. Each course is marked as maintain, modify, or archive. Definitions for these markers are below.

- Maintain—the course may need some improvements, but no immediate changes are necessary.
- Modify—the course needs improvements as soon as possible, possibly because of a major functionality issue, but the course content is acceptable.
- Archive—it may be best to archive this content because of subpar information or presentation. Information may work well if repurposed into a different course.

Lastly, each course was assigned a unique ID number, which we will use in this report to assist with identifying courses that contain specific examples mentioned in the Findings section.

Findings

As mentioned previously, our audit reviewed multiple aspects of the courses which fall under the categories of content, consistency, and functionality. Our findings are summarized below.

Content

The main category of content consists of six different elements: Grammar, tone, accuracy, DEI compliance, multimedia, and audience.

Grammar Quality

Overall, grammar was an aspect of the courses that generally scored the highest. The most common errors encountered were punctuation inconsistencies or capitalization mistakes. In particular, the following courses contained the most punctuation errors compared to other courses:

- #1.3
- #4

Tone Quality

We assessed tone by listening to how the voiceover talent narrated a course how the narration’s written tone compared to the style sheet’s requirements. Client A’s style sheet dictates that courses

should address the learner by using “you” or “your”, and as use active voice whenever possible. This was mostly consistent among the sampled courses. However, certain courses, such as Course #1.3, did not directly address the audience and instead used “the learner.”

Accuracy of Content

Accuracy of content was a concern expressed early in the auditing process. As courses have not been regularly or recently reviewed, and because laws and regulations change often, the concern was that some active courses contained outdated information.

Our team found that courses based on laws or that contained law information appeared to have been created or updated later than the last amendment or update to the law. Therefore, the sampled courses generally contained the most recent information.

However, these courses may benefit from a thorough review to ensure regulations are accurate. In particular, the courses that specifically covered FMLA may need to be reviewed for accuracy. The following courses were identified as dealing with employment law and/or FMLA:

- #1.1
- #1.2
- #1.3
- #1.4
- #4

Course 1.3 appears to have been updated after the last amendment to FMLA laws. However, this course contains a slide that sites information from a university’s human resources page. We feel that this cited source may not be the best resource to base information on. It is highly likely that this information can be found on a .gov or more relevant source as opposed to a school website.

DEI Compliance

Client A’s style guide states that stock images should promote inclusion and diversity. Our team identified two courses that potentially do not meet this requirement:

- #10.3
- #16.4

While auditing, we also considered whether course content or text met DEI guidelines. In general, course content scenarios included diverse people and situations; however, our team did identify a few courses that contained scenarios we feel were potentially insensitive to different cultural and age groups and would benefit from revision or additional information. The courses we recommend reviewing for DEI compliance include the following:

- #16.3
- #16.4
- #17

Specific concerns are listed in the accompanying spreadsheet.

Multimedia Quality

Like with tone, we assessed multimedia quality by reviewing several different aspects of the course. In this case, we reviewed multimedia assets for quality and relevance to the course content. Our team found that certain courses contain graphics or images that could benefit from updates. Examples of courses that could use multimedia updates include the following:

- 1.1
- 2
- 3
- 13

Audience Relevance

The intended audience listed on the LMS were usually correct, with a few exceptions in individual courses. In some cases, courses were aimed at supervisors but did not mention this in the description. This happened in Course #18.3, for example.

Occasionally, courses featured very specific information aimed at a certain audience. For example, course #10.2 featured a lot of material aimed at Texans or focused on Texas. Since Texas residents are a larger part of Client A's client base, this is not a major concern. However, that does mean this course is not as relevant to any non-Texan learners.

Consistency

When evaluating for consistency, we mainly focused on whether a course was consistent with Client A's style guide and style sheet, whether its layout was consistent, and whether information provided about the course on the LMS was consistent with information provided in Client A's course catalog. Courses generally scored well for consistency; however, visual branding was lacking.

Style Guide/Style Sheet

Courses were often consistent with guidelines set in the style sheet but rarely followed the ones set in the style guide. Visual branding was inconsistent throughout most courses. Often, courses did not adhere to the color pallets suggested in the style guide or in other reference material. In fact, of the 39 courses sampled by our team, only 15 followed the color pallet set by the style guide

Layouts

As stated above, layouts were not usually consistent with the style guide. There was one seemingly standard visual layout which many courses shared, but this layout was not universal.

Courses did generally have the same boilerplate narrated introductions: an introduction slide describing the course, a disclaimer slide, and a slide about course navigation. This structure provided consistency to the material. The following courses deviated from this norm:

- #1.1
- #1.3
- #4

- #8
- #19

Catalog Accuracy

Another concern expressed by Client A was whether course descriptions were present in the LMS and if so, consistent with the information found in the catalog. For the most part, courses met both of these requirements. When a course had a description different from the one in the catalog, these differences were usually minor and sometimes necessary. Some descriptions may require editing, but descriptions were typically relevant.

However, the following courses had no descriptions at all:

- #8
- #19
- #20.3

Additionally, series collections 18 and 22 both have typos in their descriptions in the LMS.

Functionality

In this category we checked links, interactive feature functionality, video players, audio quality, and accessibility.

Operational Links

A major part of our assessment was concerned with whether the links provided in the course were relevant and functional. Courses with broken links include the following:

- #3
- #14
- #20.1
- #20.2
- #22.2

The specific links that were broken are noted in the spreadsheet under column AC.

Interactive Features

In this assessment, interactive features include quizzes, knowledge checks, and any feature where a learner must click or hover over a button other than the “Next” button to continue in the course.

There was one fairly common issue with quizzes. Often, the correct answer to a question was colored differently when the answer was selected, meaning that learners could take the quiz and get a perfect score without paying attention to the course content. In other courses the answers were still colored differently when selected, but the colors did not correspond to the correct answer.

Inconsistency in interactive features was also common. Sometimes the same feature would work differently in the same course. Interactive features also sometimes contained glitches that allowed a

learner to skip course content or break the video player in some way. However, there were no glitches that permanently stopped a learner from using the course.

Video Player

A few assessment questions were concerned with how the video platform functioned. There was one seemingly standard video player for courses, but not all courses played in this format. Very few courses played in a separate window, and most courses did not play in full screen mode.

Audio Quality

Audio quality varied highly between courses, and some courses had issues with skipping or missing audio. Courses with audio quality issues include the following:

- #2)
- #6)
- #7.1
- #7.3
- #7.4
- #10.1
- #10.2
- #10.3
- #10.4
- #18.1
- #18.3
- #19
- #22.2

Courses with skipping or missing audio were:

- #1.3
- #4
- #5
- #20.1
- #22.2

Accessibility

Visual accessibility was generally good, and most courses followed a simple hierarchical format for text. It seemed that efforts were made to create a Participant Guide or transcript for most of the courses. However, some courses did not have this document or the link to access this document was broken. In other cases, this document did not contain all the voiceover or slides used in the course. Without an accurate transcript or captions, learners with certain disabilities may have no way of using the course content. Of the categories that used the rating system, the accessibility category generally received the lowest score. 25 of the 39 evaluated courses have some form of accessibility issue

Competitor Overview

Five major competitors were identified in the research process. We were unable to access the courses provided by these organizations, so a full overview of their content was not possible, but some assessments could be made based on publicly available resources.

Competitor A

This organization provides online training for local government workers. They have a wide range of content which mostly focuses on practical job training, with offshoot programs specifically targeted towards police officers, corrections officers, EMTs, and firefighters. If an organization wants online training about how to perform the specific duties for a position (i.e.: a healthcare worker or a road worker), they are more likely to find what they are looking for at Competitor A than at Client A. However, they have fewer courses on ethics, HR, management, employment law, and customer service than Client A does. Client A is more likely to attract supervisory level learners or public service HR professionals because of their wealth of training in these areas.

Competitor B

Some parts of the website say that these resources are specifically for local government workers in Pennsylvania, but other parts of the website are less clear on this, so it is unclear if this organization is a direct competitor. Their online courses seem to focus on similar areas as Client A, although with an added emphasis on finance and budget management.

Competitor C

Competitor C learning has many different courses focused on many different areas of professional development, but they also promote a program specifically for government entities. The level of the government is not specified, so these courses may be too generic to be in direct competition with Client A's target audience. Still, with Competitor C's wide brand recognition, it may have a promotional edge over Client A. There is no readily available catalog of the courses provided in Competitor C's government employee training program, so the topics the course covers are not clear. However, given Competitor C's wide variety of training topics available for all professions, it is likely an expansive list. Competitor C also stresses the production quality of their courses and the wide functionality of their learning platform as selling points.

Competitor D

Unlike Competitor C, Competitor D does not seem to have any government specific online training programs. However, they do have a wide range of courses available to learners, and some topics overlap with Client A courses. The brand recognition and ease of access may make Competitor D an appealing option even though it is not tailored for local government training.

Competitor E

Competitor E is a professional association of local government workers which provides networking and job training opportunities to members. They have a variety of both in-person and online training courses available to members a certificate program which provides training in communication, public Safety, organizational development, and leadership. These course topics have

heavy overlap with Client A's catalog. Competitor E will mostly attract learners who are already in the field. It is unlikely that Competitor E's training will ever be an option for new local government employees; however, they are currently refurbishing their online learning system and are likely going to focus more on online training in the future.

Conclusion

In our assessment, we found that some of Client A's content evaluation subcategories (such as tone, grammar, multimedia usage, and audience relevance) were overall good. In fact, grammar and tone were some of the highest scoring categories. Although a few courses had issues with accuracy and multimedia usage, courses generally rated high in these categories as well. Overall, the substance of Client A's courses is generally up to par with the Client A's standards and meets their clients' needs. However, the consistency and functionality of courses detracted from the experience.

One recurring problem was very little visual consistency. Many courses did not adhere to Client A's visual branding or style guide. Of the 39 courses we sampled, only 2 were completely consistent with Client A's branding guidelines and layout preferences, and many courses also had a different visual layout than was standard.

Course functionality also tended to be an issue. In the Resources tab of a course (if available), some links were broken, and some courses had no links at all or were missing. Occasionally, the Participant Guide or transcript was not available or incomplete. The interactive elements of courses often did not function properly, and although we did not often encounter glitches that completely barred learners from completing the course, they may still negatively impact customer satisfaction.

Ultimately, our recommendation to Client A would be to consider implementing a review or maintenance process to ensure information found in courses (especially what pertains to laws and regulations) remains relevant and accurate. We also recommend Client A apply learner feedback when needed, standardize the course creation process (such as the course format, slide titles, quiz format, and the video player), and implementing more accessibility standards so that all learners can use Client A's content.

Our overall opinion is that visual branding consistency and functionality improvements could be vitally important to Client A's content strategy. This is because Client A's competitors include well-known learning material providers like Competitor C and Competitor D, which both offer professional development courses with high production value.