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Department:
Public Service and Administration
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

GUIDELINE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SERVICE POINT LOCATORS ON THE WEBSITES OF DEPARTMENTS

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For enquiries contact:

Mr D Neethling

DeonNeethling@dpsa.gov.za

Department of Public Service and Administration

Postal Address

Private Bag X916
Pretoria
0001

Physical Address

Batho Pele House
546 Edmond Street
Arcadia, 0083

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COMMONLY USED TERMS

Geographic coordinates	Lines of latitude and longitude whose intersections determine the geographical locations of places. Coordinates are generally expressed in Decimal Degrees.
Mapping service	An online service which allows the user to see where a particular location is found on a map.
Service point	Public facilities such as offices, mobile service units and other physical points and spaces where people come into contact with government to obtain information, communicate with government and to access services.
Service point locator	A searchable online application that allows the user to find the site locations of service points and to obtain information such as the services that are provided, their contact details and addresses.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 For people to access government services, they require information on which services are provided by departments, how these can be accessed and where their service points are located within their communities. Hence it is important that departments should assist the public by providing them with relevant, up-to-date, accurate and complete information on their facilities and the services that these provide. Such information should also be quick and easy to find.
- 1.2 Increasingly powerful and user-friendly Information Communications Technologies and on-line applications, which have become readily available, can be used in innovative ways to provide the public with information on the services that are provided by departments.
- 1.3 Various departments have utilised such technologies to establish service point locators on their websites. These are searchable online applications that make it much more convenient and easier for people to identify where service points are located and to obtain additional information that they require in order to access their services.
- 1.4 Previous research that has been conducted by the Department of Public Service and Administration has, however, revealed that service point locators are often difficult to find on the websites of departments and the public might not even be aware that these exist. Locators also vary in relation to the way that they are branded, the type and amount of information and the functionality that they provide. Some are much more informative, intuitive and convenient to use than others. This lack of uniformity can be confusing to the public.
- 1.5 Hence there is a need for a broad, introductory Guideline that could assist government departments, which provide services directly to the public, to create and maintain service point locators on their websites.

2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

- 2.1 The objective of the Guideline is to assist departments to establish and maintain service point locators on their websites. The document highlights key considerations and it sets out broad parameters in relation to the kind of functionality and type of information that that these should provide.
- 2.2 The implementation of this Guideline by departments will, among other things, assist in achieving the following:
 - 2.2.1 Greater uniformity in relation to the type of information and functionality that is provided by the service point locators of various departments.
 - 2.2.2 Locators will provide the public with important information that they require, in particular, on the services that are provided by departments and where these can be physically accessed, either at a facility closest to them or at a facility of their choice.
 - 2.2.3 Information provided by locators will always be up-to-date, complete and accurate.
 - 2.2.4 Locators will be quick, easy and convenient to use by making use of drop-down menus or lists of options that can guide and assist the user to filter search results to locations that offer a particular type of service.
- 2.3 It is important to note that this Guideline should not be interpreted and followed rigidly. There are various optional approaches and methodologies that departments can follow to establish and maintain their facility locators.

3. TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience of the Guideline includes, among others, personnel within departments that are responsible for service delivery provisioning, ICT systems and website developers, communications specialists and GIS practitioners that are responsible for the collection and management of service point data.

4. POLICY AND REGULATORY CONTEXT

- 4.1 Even though there are currently no regulatory requirements for departments to establish service point locators on their websites, they are obliged to improve the accessibility of their services and to publish information about their various types of facilities and the services that they provide.
- 4.2 The **Bill of Rights in the Constitution** obligates departments to improve the accessibility of their services with a view to improving the quality of life of citizens.
- 4.3 The **Batho Pele White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997)** requires national and provincial departments to provide the public with full, accurate and up-to-date information about services that they deliver.
- 4.4 The **Promotion of Access to Information Act (2000)** seeks to promote access to information and to create an environment which facilitates cooperation among stakeholders regarding access to information.
- 4.5 The **Policy Guidelines for South African Government Websites (2012)** developed by the Government Communication and Information Service (GCIS) for national government departments to develop, manage and maintain websites that are standard across all departments.
- 4.6 The **Public Service Regulations (2016)** prescribe that departments must publish the names, contact details, telephone numbers and addresses of their service delivery facilities as well as the type of facility and services that are offered. Facility types include the head office, provincial, regional and local offices of a department as well as any service delivery point where public services are obtained.
- 4.7 The **DPSA Guideline on the Collection and Management of Service Point Data (2022 Edition)** sets out practical measures that departments can take to improve the collection, management and dissemination of their service point data.

5. KEY CONSIDERATIONS

In planning the establishment of service point locators on their websites, there are various aspects that departments should consider and these are elaborated upon in the Guideline. The most important considerations are summarised below:

- 5.1 The link to the locator should be prominently displayed on the home page of the department's website so that it is clearly recognisable and quick and easy to find.
- 5.2 In determining the functionality and the information that should be provided by the locator, it is necessary to consider the nature of the services that are directly provided by the department to the public and the number and types of service point facilities that the department has.
- 5.3 Where departments have large numbers of service points, the locator should be as interactive as possible and it should make use of drop-down menus or lists of options that can guide and assist the user to filter search results to locations that offer a particular type of service.
- 5.4 In instances where departments only have a few service points, simple geographic maps with place markers and additional information can be embedded in the website of the department, using copy-paste functionality.
- 5.5 Locators should always deliver up-to-date, accurate and complete information that is both useful and relevant to the user's search query. Users should be able to obtain information about service points of their choice and/or facilities that are situated nearest to them.

6. INFORMATION THAT SHOULD BE PROVIDED BY LOCATORS

- 6.1 Using a service point locator means that the public will be able to access important information about the services and service points of a department in one place. Locators should always deliver up-to-date, complete and accurate information that is

both useful and relevant to the user's search query. The data on the locator should hence be regularly updated.

6.2 Users should be able to obtain information about service points of their choice and/or the facilities that are situated nearest to them. Departments should consult their service beneficiaries on the type and format of the information that they require.

6.3 As a minimum, the service point information that should be provided by a locator should consist of the items listed in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Minimum information that should be provided by a locator

Facility type or category
Name of facility
A description of the services that are provided at the service point
Fees payable, where applicable
Office Hours
Physical Address
Contact details: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Telephone number• An E-mail Address
Geographic coordinates provided in Decimal Degree format
The geographic location of a service point on a map display

7. THE FUNCTIONALITY THAT LOCATORS SHOULD PROVIDE

7.1 Service point locators of departments should be as interactive as possible and they should provide the user with a range of options to search for a particular type of service point in a region or place of their choice. Typically users want to find information on a service point as quickly as possible. Hence it is important that the public should spend minimal time and effort typing, searching, scrolling and reading while discovering service points nearest to them or in a selected geographic area or place.

7.2 Once a service point has been selected, the locator must be able to deliver information that is relevant to the user's search query. The functionality that should be provided by the locator is highlighted in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Functionality that a service point locator should provide

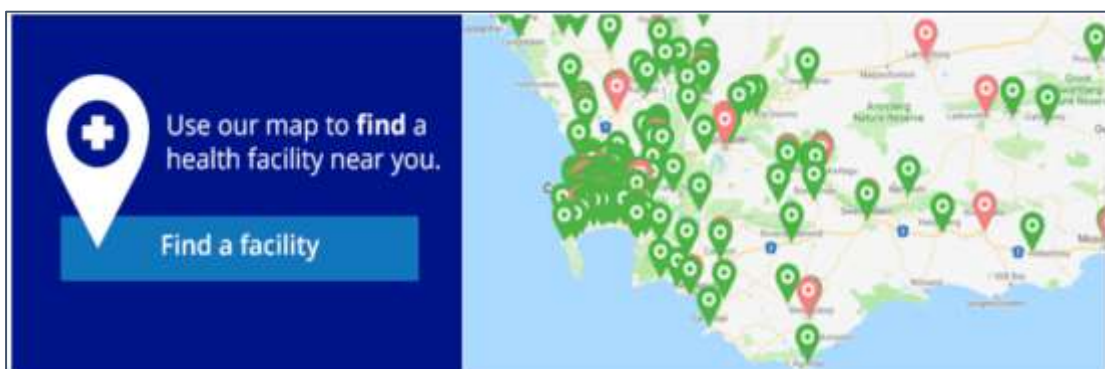
1. Easily find the link to the locator on the home page of a department's website.
2. Identify the geographic location of a facility, for instance, in a province or region.
3. Obtain additional information such as the addresses and contact details for the selected facility and the services that are provided.

7.3 Finding the link to the locator on the home page of a department's website

7.3.1 The home page of the department's website should be the first point of contact for the service point locator. It is important that the link to the locator should be prominently displayed on the home page, preferably near the top of the screen where it is clearly visible. The link should be clearly labelled and it should be specific.

7.3.2 Figure 1 below provides an example of the link on the home page of the Western Cape Department of Health:

Figure 1: Image of link to the facility locator on the website of the Health Department of the Western Cape Government (<https://www.westerncape.gov.za/dept/health>) (2021)



7.4 How to determine where service points are geographically located

7.4.1 The locator page should provide a link to a drop-down menu or list of options that can guide and assist the user to filter search results to locations that offer a particular type of service. For instance:

- Users can do a place name search by selecting a particular geographic area (such as a province) or particular place (such as a town) by using drop-down menus to obtain information on the location of a facility in that area.
- Users can also input their physical address information to find the closest service point to them, for instance, by locating facilities within a specified radius of the user's location.

7.4.2 Locators can be designed to automatically determine the geographic location of users, provided that they allow the website to access their location. Such geolocation allows users to identify the nearest service points to them without having to type out their addresses.

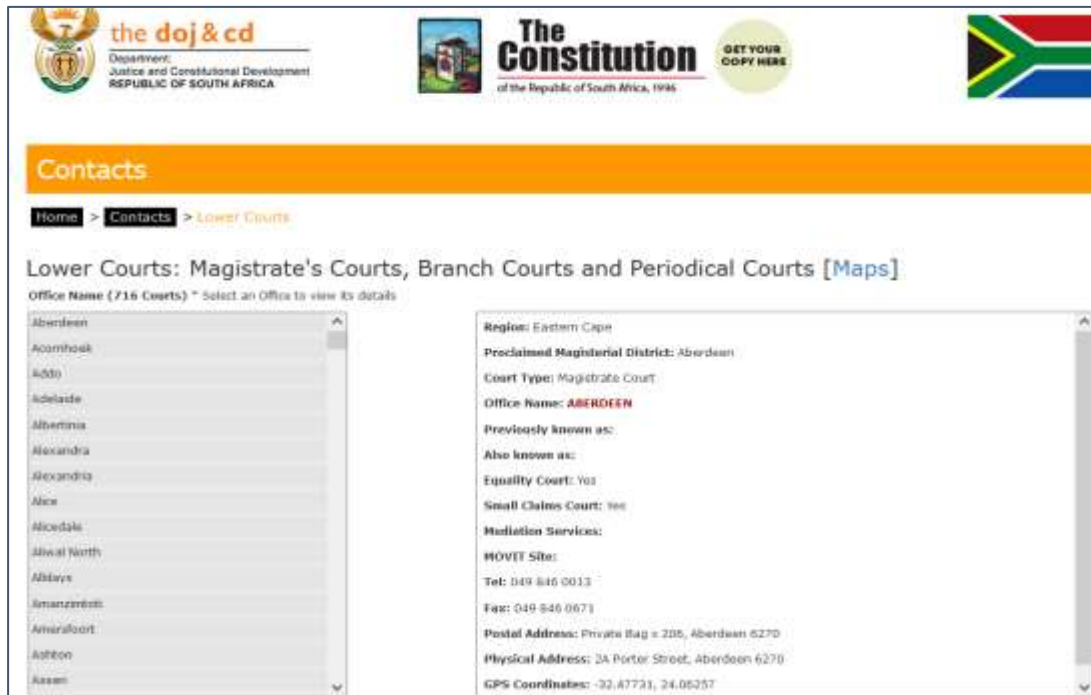
7.4.3 Furthermore, service point locators often operate in conjunction with well-known external mapping services such as Google Maps, Apple Maps and Bing Maps. These make it possible to view the location of a service point on a geographic or satellite map. The map display can also allow users to move around and zoom in and out the map and to see streets and other landmarks in the vicinity.

7.4.4 Mapping services also make it possible to obtain driving directions to a selected facility and these can be sent, together with geographic coordinates, to the email address or cell phone number of the user.

7.5 Using the locator to obtain additional information about service points

- 7.5.1 It should also be possible to obtain additional information such as the addresses and contact details of service points by clicking on a selected facility on a map display or by doing a place name search.
- 7.5.2 The results of the search should preferably be displayed in an integrated and seamless manner, for instance, in the form of a split screen. Descriptive information on a selected service point can be presented in a table on the one side and a map view on the other side of the screen. Alternatively, maps can be presented above or below the table.
- 7.5.3 **Figure 2** provides a screenshot of the lower court facility locator on the website of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. It includes a list of towns in the table on the left-hand side of the screen.
- 7.5.4 By clicking on a name of a town, for instance, Aberdeen, all information on the lower court in Aberdeen is displayed in the table on the right-hand side of the screen.

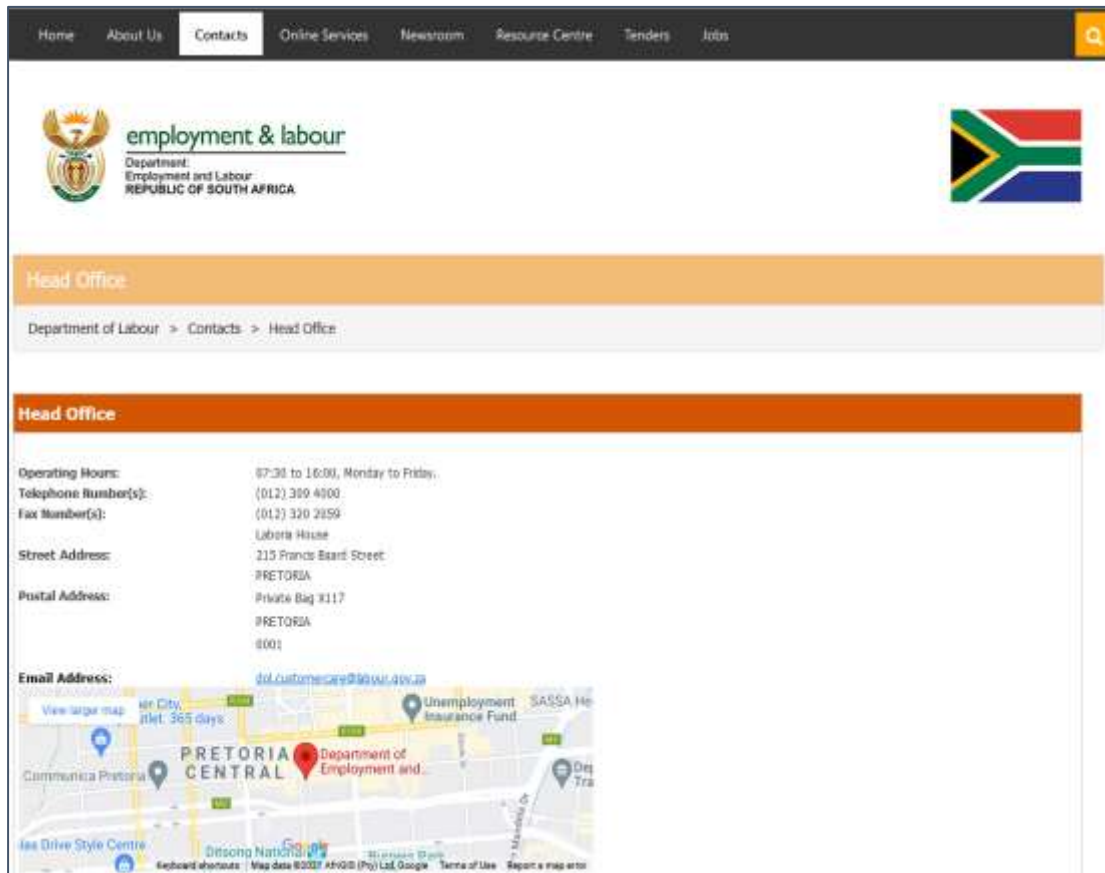
Figure 2: Contact information for lower courts (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2021) https://www.justice.gov.za/contact/lowercourts_full.html (2021)



8. METHODOLOGY TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A SERVICE POINT LOCATOR

- 8.1 There are various methodologies and software tools that departments can use to create, update, edit and maintain service point locators on their websites. Having a service point locator that is embedded in the website of a department does not have to be a hard task. In instances where departments only have a few facilities, a simple map with place markers and additional information can be embedded in the website using copy-paste functionality.
- 8.2 An example is provided in **Figure 3** includes a map and information about the head office of the Department of Employment and Labour.

Figure 3: Service point locator: Department of Employment and Labour (2021)
<http://www.labour.gov.za/contacts/head-office>



- 8.3 Where a department has multiple service points, it might be preferable to create a locator using readily available software that can be procured from the private sector. This Guideline does not advocate the use of any particular software, although reference is made in the document to some external mapping services that departments can consider.
- 8.4 Adding lots of service point information to a locator could take a fair amount of time, however, some software tools have a bulk upload feature to speed this up. It might be necessary to provide the location information in a spreadsheet such as Excel or .csv format. The advantage is it that it is possible to manage the service point data of the department inside such a spreadsheet, e.g. to edit/ add locations.
- 8.5 It is also possible to manage the data in the Content Management System of the department's website. N Such systems provides website authoring, collaboration, and

administration tools designed to allow users with little knowledge of web programming or mark-up languages to create and manage website content with relative ease. More information on such systems is provided in the Policy Guidelines for South African Government Websites which was developed by the Government Communication and Information Service (GCIS).

- 8.6 Since location data is constantly evolving it is important to obtain the most up-to-date, complete service point data of the department. Once the latest data has been obtained it is possible to update the locator to ensure that the user is always searching against the most recent data available.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Departments should create and maintain service point locators on their websites to reduce the time and effort that members of the public take to obtain information about where their various service points are physically located. Among others, such information should include addresses and accurate geographic coordinates.
- 9.2 It is important that the link to the locator on the home page of the website should be clearly branded and prominently displayed so that it is easy for the public to recognise. Locators should also be designed in such a manner that they are convenient and intuitive to use. Furthermore, the public should be made aware in the communications of departments that such locators exist on their websites.
- 9.3 Not all locators will require the same level of detail and technical functionality and some could be simpler to create and maintain than others. Departments with large numbers of facilities are likely to require a different approach to those that have few facilities. If necessary, departments should consult other departments and experts for additional information on the most suitable approaches that they should follow.