

Government Without Walls Initiative/State Portal Home Page

Executive Summary

On March 1, 2001, Governor George E. Pataki announced the official release of New York State's new Portal Home Page (<http://www.state.ny.us>) and the State's common web banner that is being placed on all executive agency home pages. This banner provides easy and convenient access to government information, services and transactions available on the Internet, and allows users to find, from a central location, information without having to know which State agency provides the service.

This release marks the first major milestone in Governor Pataki's e-Commerce/e-Government initiative, which he officially launched on June 12, 2000. The theme of this initiative is a "Government Without Walls," breaking down the walls of individual State agencies for citizens doing business with State government and allowing citizens to conduct business and find information anytime, anywhere without having to know which agency handles each type of transaction--a one-stop shopping concept.

The Common Web Banner has four clickable buttons that provide a central access point to State government information, services and transactions. Visitors to all New York State web pages can now easily find information by topic, by geographic location, by word search, or by agency. The State has built a central web-accessible database that more than sixty-two agencies use to keep the information, services and transactions content of the portal and web banner buttons up-to-date.

Also included in the Government Without Walls Initiative is the establishment of the "Top 75" priority services and transactions to bring online first. A list of these is available at: www.oft.state.ny.us/ecommerce/top_priority.htm. As services and transactions are brought online, new ones will be added to the "Top 75" list.

Benefits

New York State government is now able to more effectively fulfill its mission of service to its customers by providing a convenient, centrally located online resource for information, services and transactions. Government information is now available 24x7x365, thereby, improving customer service operations.

Additionally, the coordinated approach of this Government Without Walls initiative will result in less duplication across agencies, resulting in increased efficiencies of government resources and greater cooperation among agencies.

Government Without Walls Initiative/State Portal Home Page

Description of the Project

On March 1, 2001, Governor George E. Pataki announced the official release of New York State's new Portal Home Page (<http://www.state.ny.us>) and the State's Common Web Banner that is being placed on all executive agency home pages. This banner provides easy and convenient access to government information, services and transactions available on the Internet, and allows users to find, from a central location, information without having to know which State agency provides the service.

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The State's new Portal Home Page was designed by American Management Systems in collaboration with the New York State Office for Technology. The design of the Common Web Banner was based on a contest by an inter-agency committee.

Each agency has the Common Web Banner, in one of 13 color choices, on its individual agency home page and one of three varieties of a smaller common web banner on the second level pages. This Common Web Banner has four clickable buttons that provide a central access point to State government information, services and transactions. Visitors to all State web pages can now easily find information by topic, by geographic location, by word search, or by agency.

The Common Web Banner



Once a visitor has access to the portal, either from the State Portal Home Page or the Common Web Banner, the four main entryways into NYS' government

Information, services and transactions are as follows:

- Clicking "**Governor Pataki**" brings users to the Governor's Home Page; Clicking "**map-NY**" is the gateway to locating State government information, services and transactions geographically. This includes full GIS systems and tabular data arranged by geographic regions. All of this information is accessible by category, agency or word search;
- "**e-bizNYS**" is the doorway for doing business in and with New York State. This page enables business and citizens to interact with New York State by providing quick access to transactions that can be conducted on-line with the State and a central location of downloadable forms. It is also the one-stop place for businesses doing business in New York State. Again, all of this information is accessible by category, agency or word search; "**Citizen Guide**" is where citizens locate government-related information, find the answers to their most frequently asked questions (FAQs) and access on-line government services. This information is category driven, but also available by word search.

Within the portal or banner, the search capability, named "**Search-NY**", is available from all the buttons. Clicking on "New York State" brings users to the New York State Portal Home Page (www.state.ny.us.)

The Common Web Banner application is comprised of two major components:

1. The first component is the NYSLINKS input application, which is available to authors and editors of Link, FAQ, and Application Information. Sixty-two State agencies provide input to this application, which is running on a WINDOWS NT Server, running IIS and Cold Fusion. The Input server is protected by SSL and users are required to authenticate through Netegrity to the New York State Central LDAP Directory (Sun-Netscape). The NYSLINKS data is stored in a MS-SQL server (Enterprise) clustered database on a separate tier from the Web Servers.
2. The second component is the output application, which is called the banner support application. The output side of the application runs on Load Balanced NT Clusters running IIS, Cold Fusion and the Verity search engine. Using pre-staged Verity collections in memory and Front-end Caching servers enhances performance.

Communications are provided via a primary T-3 circuit that is backed up by a 15GB circuit.

As noted above, there is a central application, a web-accessible database built by New York State that more than sixty-two agencies use to keep the information, services and transactions content of the portal and web banner

buttons up-to-date. Each agency has Internet access and controls their input into the banner through a designated "publisher." Through the use of the central database, over 800 frequently asked questions and answers and over 700 links are currently available through the banner. These are all placed into one or more of the 165 categories and sub-categories by the agencies. An e-Commerce/e-Government Advisory group comprised of state, local and private entities provides central guidance of the agencies' input into the portal to ensure cohesiveness among the many agencies and reduce overlap of information and services within a category.

New York State's banner and banner button pages are completely accessible and "Bobby Approved," (i.e. meets an industry-accepted criteria for compliance with World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Guidelines). Through a personalization option, the site is available in a text version, non-flash, and variable size print. Alternate text is provided for all graphics, ensuring that everyone can access New York State government on-line, thereby narrowing the digital divide.

Also included in the Government Without Walls Initiative is the establishment of the "Top 75" priority services and transactions to bring online first. A list of these is available at: www.oft.state.ny.us/ecommerce/top_priority.htm. As services and transactions are brought online, new ones will be added to the "Top 75" list.

On-line transactions are available in many areas, including vehicle re-registration, state income tax filing/status/extensions, environmental permitting, higher education tuition assistance programs, Empire Passport to State parks and recreational facilities, custom plate ordering, E-ZPass accounts and many more. New York State is a leader in the volume of information, services and transactions that it offers its citizens and businesses on-line with over 178 services and transactions already available on-line and over 400 more identified to bring on-line.

Significance to the improvement of the operation of government

New York State government is now able to more effectively fulfill its mission of service to its customers by providing a convenient, centrally located online resource for information, services and transactions. Government information is now available 24x7x365, thereby, improving customer service operations.

Since the March 1 release of the new site, over 660 emails have been received from citizens and responded to. These emails include comments, suggestions and inquiries from citizens looking for particular government information online. Because of this feedback, we are able to tailor the online services to more

closely aligned with what our customers—whether private citizen or business entity—are looking for.

Additionally, the coordinated approach of this Government Without Walls initiative will result in less duplication across agencies, resulting in increased efficiencies of government resources and greater cooperation among agencies. Prior to the development of the new Common Web Banner, State agency websites were largely organized from an agency perspective, not a citizen perspective, and web sites each had their own independent look and feel. The fact that sixty-two different agencies are working together toward a common goal is a testament to the collaborative approach that the State has taken in this endeavor.

Benefits Realized by Service Recipients, Taxpayers, Agency or State

Service Recipients: Citizens and businesses now have a single source to go to for information, without having to know which state agency provides the service. They can access the information, services and transactions when they want, not when government is open.

Taxpayers: Because of increased efficiencies in government operations due to bringing more services and transactions online, taxpayers will be receiving a better “return on investment.”

Agency/State: The state will likely see increased access to many of its services, transactions and information now that that information is easily accessible from a central location.

An average of 9,100 visitors have accessed this new site each day. While most visitors are from the United States, access has also come from 19 foreign countries and makes up 4% of the total visits. The average visitor spends just over seven minutes at the most site, and the most used portion of the banner is the Citizen Guide, followed by the Search-NY feature.

Return on investment, short-term/long-term payback

The immediate benefit is that citizens and businesses will be able to access government services and transactions online much more easily--and at times convenient to them.

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Long-term payback will be that the State will be able to achieve efficiencies and save resources by not duplicating efforts.

The web banner, including the Citizen Guide, map-NY, e-bizNYS, and Search-NY are centrally hosted by the State Office for Technology, thereby providing central security, network redundancy, support, backup and monitoring. This significantly reduces the costs of individual agencies providing these types of services.