

Title of Nomination: Criminal Offenders Network - Online Service

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CATEGORY: Digital\_Government\_G\_to\_C

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## **Category: Digital Government: Government to Citizen (G to C)**

### **Correctional Offenders Network**

#### **Executive Summary**

DiscoveringMontana.com, the official state website, in conjunction with the Montana Department of Corrections recently released the Correctional Offender Network (CON). CON was launched in April 2002, during National Crime Victims Week. It received over 74,000 hits on the first day it went live. It is the most complete report of its type in the nation.

The Correctional Offender Network, CON, allows the user to search for information on the correctional status of convicted felons in Montana. It is the most complete report of its type in the nation.

CON responded to the needs of both the citizens of Montana and professionals within the law enforcement and corrections community. This free service provides the user with several search options including name, date of birth, or type of offense. The report returned contains not only demographic information, AKA's, and a complete legal history, but also physical characteristics including locations of scars, marks and tattoos, and a photograph when available

Before the launching of CON, the Montana Department of Corrections had no centralized storage for the information on criminal offenders dating back to the 1940's. Victims rights advocates, citizens, and law enforcement officials struggled to find the most current information efficiently. Now, within seconds, access to this public information is available to everyone any time of the day. The service receives over 10,000 hits per day. CON has resulted in freed up time in both the law enforcement and victims' advocate fields.

## **Correctional Offenders Network**

### **A. Description of project**

The Correctional Offender Network, CON, allows the user to search for information on the correctional status of convicted felons in Montana. It is the most complete report of its type in the nation. DiscoveringMontana.com, the official state website, developed the Correctional Offender Network in partnership with the Montana Department of Corrections.

This free service allows the user to search for information on the correctional status of convicted felons in Montana. Using CON, victims, law enforcement professionals, and the general public has immediate access to up-to-date, public information in an area where fast and accurate information can be a matter of personal and/or public safety.

The Correctional Offender Database is an Internet based service that is free to the public. CON responded to the needs of both the citizens of Montana and professionals within the law enforcement and corrections community. This service provides the user with several search options including name, date of birth, or type of offense. The report returned contains not only demographic information, AKA's, and a complete legal history, but also physical characteristics including locations of scars, marks and tattoos, and a photograph when available.

Although other states have applications that provide a similar service, CON demonstrates innovation in its qualitative leap in regards to design and usability. CON's design innovation is best exemplified by its

- 1) intuitive interface
- 2) increased search options
- 3) comprehensive, easy to read report obtained in two easy steps
- 4) ability to access offender photos when available

CON can be best appreciated in comparison to other applications with the same objective. It is the most complete report of its type in the nation.

CON was launched during National Crime Victims Week, in April 2002. It received over 74,000 hits on the first day it went live.

### **B. Significance to the improvement of the operation of government**

Creating CON required the consolidation into a single database, information contained in over 15 different tables in several separate systems, housed in numerous locations, and dating back to the 1940s. Prior to the launch of CON, agency staff was overwhelmed with requests for critical data that was not readily available, or even easy to locate. After receiving over 74,000 hits on the first day, the site settled into receiving an average of 10,000 hits per day.

CON was developed and is maintained without the use of tax dollars or a general fund appropriation. Nor are there any fees involved with the use of the service. This is possible through a public/private partnership between the state of Montana and DiscoveringMontana.com.

This service is free to the public and accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**C. Benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayer, agency or state**

CON was introduced to the public during the 2002 Victims' Rights Conference. Users were impressed by the usability and functionality of the service. They said that "peace of mind" was the greatest service provided by the application. Victims' Rights and advocacy organizations were provided with the opportunity to test the service and provide feedback. Their clients likewise reported satisfaction with the application citing that this service utilizes technology to improve the safety and welfare of Montana's residents.

Prior to the launching of CON, not even law enforcement workers in the field were able to readily access public information on convicted felons. Now, this information is online, available not only to professionals, but to the public at large.

This application allows users to provide feedback from any point in the application. The service was developed and improved with participation of victims' rights and advocacy organizations and law enforcement. The service will continue to evolve with feedback from these and other users.

**D. Return on investment, short-term/long-term payback**

Montana Interactive, Inc. (MII) completed the development of CON. MII operates under a public/private partnership with the state of Montana to provide DiscoveringMontana.com and the associated e-government applications the state chooses to implement through the DiscoveringMontana.com portal. By not paying development costs for the service, the Department of Corrections saved \$54,550. Maintenance and enhancements to the service are also provided without charge.