

2002 NASCIO Recognition Program Nomination For Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Information Technology

Title of Nomination: Access Washington™

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Category for Judging: Communications Infrastructure Category

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Communications Infrastructure

Description of the project, including the length of time in operation

Access Washington™ has been delivering information and services over the Internet with a single face of Washington government since 1998. A pioneer in enterprise-wide state government Web portals, Access Washington continues to grow, improve and mature. New features have been added recently that showcase the collaborative relationship between state agencies and local jurisdictions as they continue to offer an even greater array of online services.

Access Washington is delivering well over 300 online transaction services and a vast number of informational services to citizens in Washington every day. They can access the site and use their preferred method of navigation: easy-to-use search, robust menu structure, Life Events, or the “one click” approach through quick links tools. They are supported 24 hours a day, seven days a week through an extensive customer support service that includes both self-help screens and e-mail support. Access Washington just added *Rapid Answer™* to provide a quick, interactive tool to deliver fast and easy support to citizens. Access Washington is delivering on its promise of providing a single face to government.

Citizens are leveraging the power and accuracy of the portal’s centerpiece natural language search engine, Ask George™, sending usage up by about 66 percent since its launch in early 2001. Ask George not only finds state government information, but city and county information too. Access Washington’s 24-hour, self-help customer support service continues to provide exceptional support to citizens. Overall site traffic climbed 23 percent between May 2001 and May 2002.

Access Washington recently unveiled a comprehensive new “Life Events” section that helps point citizens to key government services they will need at different times of their life. Not only does Access Washington provide the news hub for government news, but also we have added a new, daily news feed that delivers the latest state agency news to anyone interested in subscribing to the free service.

Transact Washington™, an extension of Access Washington, is the state's authentication gateway to secure government services. Transact Washington leverages Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) and digital certificate technology to identify and authenticate users. See <http://transact.wa.gov/twRegister/transact/appList?sort=level> for a list of the services that can be conducted using this secure gateway.

When disaster strikes people will often turn to the Internet for help. An Emergency Resources feature linked from the portal's front page provides instant access to the information and resources citizens need during emergencies.

At your E-Service is a compact collection of popular e-services available through Washington state government. In this area citizens can reserve a campsite, buy a ferry or rail pass, file for unemployment insurance, pay child support, renew their vehicle or

boat license, purchase a fish or game license, obtain criminal conviction records, acquire a business license or birth certificate and even register to vote.

A new page describes help and support for Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) users who visit Access Washington and a compilation of general resources and tools for PDA users. A prominent link to a multi-agency state employee phone book and e-mail look-up service is a new addition to the portal. A new Accessibility page tells readers that Access Washington is designed for viewing in most Internet browsers and browser versions in order to reach the widest audience possible. The Access Washington Privacy Notice addresses the collection, use, security of and access to information that may be obtained through the state portal. A site information section addresses the external link policy, awards, contact information and other types of assistance.

Significance to the improvement of the operation of government

Through one portal - Access Washington - citizens can quickly get to information and services from more than 130 state agencies, boards and commissions and more than 240 political subdivisions across the state. Access Washington is linked to nearly 107,000 other Web pages, showing that the "single face of government" approach is both popular and practical.

Never before has state government been so easy, available and intertwined. With Web-based service delivery, the political boundaries between cities, counties and state government are decreasing in importance, at least from the citizen's perspective. Far more important is the ability to develop a common set of tools by which citizens can receive government services with a minimum of frustration and confusion. Going online, not in-line is no longer a catch phrase – it's a mandate.

For the citizens of Washington state, Access Washington points the way. The portal is the first stop for government-to-business transactions, tourism, legislative information, social and human services, laws and regulations, lottery results, licenses, state news and even recreation. Through Access Washington, the Internet has made possible what really couldn't have been done just a few years ago. It is 24-hour service counter serving thousands of people in thousands of ways, every day. Access Washington is the new seat of government that represents the way citizens in Washington can interact with their government from their homes or offices.

Benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agency or state

State of Washington residents are increasingly relying on Internet access for e-commerce transactions and for government services. A 2001 survey by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration indicates that 60.4 percent of all Washington households have Internet access, behind only Alaska at 64.1 percent and New Hampshire at 61.6 percent. Even for those without home Internet access, public libraries have stepped in to fill the gap. Most libraries in the state provide public access to the Internet, and library records show that public access workstations are in use an average of 71 percent of the time.

Widespread citizen access is one of the reasons why Access Washington is so easy to use. The portal provides many paths to meet the varied needs of citizens. If citizens prefer to use a search function, the portal features the easy but powerful Ask George. If citizens prefer to browse the available e-service applications, they can use a “one click” approach. If they prefer to review Life Events to walk through the events of *their* life, and see where government can assist, Access Washington delivers.

Access Washington provides true service to provide strong customer satisfaction. One of the ways we measure this is by the review of data from our search and customer support requests – and the feedback is fabulous. We hear from our citizens every day and they are delighted with the customer service they receive.

The Access Washington team continually updates the site to provide a clean, simple site while making the state’s vast number of services available online. The intuitive interface provides multiple methods to meet the needs of the citizens. The search is key to this support strategy. A citizen can *Ask George* just as he or she would do in conversation. It doesn’t get much easier than that.

Access Washington takes seriously the issues of privacy, accessibility, intended use, and customer support. Access Washington posts the links for the text version, accessibility and customer support prominently at the top of the page. The bottom of the page clearly notes the privacy notice for the site as well as information regarding the “External Content on Access Washington” policy. This provides information to citizens about the purpose of the portal site.

Participation with online government is easy and accessible on Access Washington. Citizens can quickly link to the Legislative site to track legislation in progress; they can link to Washington’s Public Affairs Network site, TVW, and review television coverage of state government deliberations and public policy events via video and/or audio links. Citizens can use the Voters Services and Public Affairs selection from the main menu of Public Services to locate information about voting, elections, initiatives and public disclosure. Citizens engage the portal in an interactive way through e-mail or phone. Children use Access Washington to link to the “Just for Kids” portion of the portal. It is our objective to follow up rapidly with each customer support request, and ensure a high degree of customer satisfaction.

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

A portal into government is not nice to have, but is a *must have*. In Washington, there is a conservative statistic that describes the Internet penetration in the state at 80 percent and in Seattle, at 90 percent. Citizens expect Access Washington to be available delivering services at all times. The citizens served by Access Washington can measure the return on the portal investment best.

Here is a summary of some of the specific comments received from visitors to Access Washington.

Just a little to note to let you know that the Access Washington web site is TOP-NOTCH. I do a lot of professional research on the web. Your site makes it very easy to find the information my company need and I need. It is well organized in a logical manner. Thanks for providing such a terrific resource.

I just wanted to write back to thank you so much for handling my inquiry with importance and giving me so much information to work with. Thank-you very much.

Thanks so much for taking my comments seriously and fixing it! That's the best customer support I've ever had on a tech issue, and I do need to use access.wa a lot.

Thank you for your prompt response. I have accessed the site you identified. Most of the information is there and I will put it to use. Thanks again.

Thank you so much! You have no idea how helpful this is to our work group and me! I have been searching the net for weeks trying to find this type of list. Again, thank you for your efforts. They are much appreciated. Have a great day.

Thank you for your prompt assistance in answering my question. I also appreciate you giving me links and website address to further my search.

Thanks for your quick response!

Yes, very helpful and quick. Thank you so much.

Thank you! Your information was very helpful and I was able to find out what I needed to know. Thank you again!

I just emailed you this evening about my question for my father getting financial aid about the eye surgery. I just wanted to tell you how grateful I am on your excellent speed of getting back to me. I appreciate it very much and definitely think you deserve a raise for what you do :) Just to let you know, again, I appreciate how quick you got back to me and with all the help you have given.

The information you sent was just what I needed and fast. Thanks!

I have to say, I'm utterly amazed at your response to me. Not only did it only take a few MINUTES to get my answer, but also it included the answer I was looking for!

I sincerely thank you for replying to my inquiry. Shortly after I sent you the message I tried the Health Department section and located the information. Again thank you and I hope ya'll's weather is better than ours down here in Illinois.

I live in Texas but I LOVE DIS Access Washington! (I'm a consultant so I need to know what's going on in other states.) Rest assured, I'm going to write the powers that be in my state telling them what a wonderful service you have and asking why we don't have this option! You all deserve a raise for such good work!