



Commonwealth of Kentucky

2006 NASCIO Recognition Awards Nomination
Category: Digital Government: Government to Citizen

KY Secretary of State's Model Web Site

Kentucky Office of the Secretary of State

The Kentucky Secretary of State's Web site is a model of efficiency and service delivery. Since its launch in 2005, the site has provided constituents with an extensive amount of information concerning the duties of the office and empowered them with an increasing number of tools to engage their government through a variety of online services.



Executive Summary

The Kentucky Office of the Secretary of State's Web site was redesigned in 2005 to reach a variety of constituents throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the nation, and world. The intent of the site is to provide constituents with an extensive amount of information concerning the duties of the office as well as to empower constituents to engage in their government through a variety of online services. With the redesign, the Office hoped to reduce the cumbersome nature of the old site, while providing citizens with a user-friendly portal into their government that was ADA accessible.

While the Office communicates with a variety of constituents, the site is designed for citizens who work directly with the office, whether for the first time or otherwise. The Office has also targeted its Web site efforts for members of the media who desire immediate access to government records that the Office holds. In addition, the site was designed to allow users who are fluent in languages other than English to use the site. Although Kentucky has very few residents who do not speak English and would therefore not require a translation service, the Office does work with international constituents, many of which have commented on the helpfulness of the site's translation ability.

The Office's diverse statutory responsibilities make displaying the information quite cumbersome. Kentucky Interactive, a Web site provider for the Commonwealth, has indicated that other than the state's web portal, this site contains more information than any other site in Kentucky state government. The Office believes that the redesigned site has addressed this issue in an effective and efficient manner.

The Office views the site as an enormous success. The site was already one of the most frequently visited sites in the state; now, the site receives, on average, 1,000 more unique hits per day, making it one of the most frequently visited Web sites in Kentucky state government. In addition, the site has been referenced in the media as the "#1 Web site for business" in Kentucky. It has also garnered incredibly positive feedback from repetitive users of the site. Complaints about the site's cumbersome nature have dropped over 85% since its initial launch. Turnaround time for other requests has decreased in the office with most requests and filings filled within 24 hours, but all within three working days.

The site has even been recognized as one of the best government Web sites in the world by a variety of international Web site awards agencies. Perhaps most notably, the site, which is available at www.sos.ky.gov, has been deemed a success by other Secretaries of State with one secretary calling it the "ideal model for a Web site" and two states copying the design – literally (www.azsos.gov/, www.sdsos.gov/).

Project Description

The Office of the Secretary of State maintains millions of records for a variety of state functions and is responsible for hundreds of thousands of filings each year. Many constituents require the aforementioned documents and filings for a similarly diverse array of purposes. Previously, these functions were only available during business hours and by either mailing requests/filings or speaking to live personnel. The turnaround time of these requests was lengthy, even extending into weeks at times. Even information about how to utilize these services had to be obtained through slow, antiquated processes.

The Office of the Secretary of State has launched an effort to "Save Time, Anytime, Online!" The concept of this effort is to digitize all records and filing processes as much as legally and logistically possible. Millions of records are now accessible online. Over 20 online services are available ranging from business entity annual report filings to a summonses tracking service.

While the Web site has been in existence since the mid-nineties, most of the online services and records have been added in the last two and half years, primarily following the April 2005 launch of the redesigned site. Information and documents are either digitally transmitted or scanned immediately and provided online as they are filed. Previously filed documents are currently being digitized and are made available as completed.

Examples of recent enhancements to the Web site include:

- Voter Information Center and Voter Information Guides provide numerous online services that allow voters to prepare for upcoming elections by viewing sample ballots online, checking voter registration information and obtaining driving directions to polling locations.
- The Secretary of State's Kentucky Land Office linked its Kentucky Cities and Counties Web site with the Kentucky Incorporated Cities Mapping Portal to deliver up-to-date GIS maps reflecting recent annexations filed with the Land Office.
- The Web site provides instant access to historical land records in the office's custody with the launch of the Kentucky Land Office Web site.
- The site offers new Web services for Kentucky corporations, including online access to several corporate certificates that could previously only be requested by phone. Popular forms such as the certificate of existence and the certificate of authorization can be found under the Online Business Service Database.

- In addition, Kentucky is one of four states taking proactive steps to prevent voter fraud by exchanging voter registration data and cross-matching the information to identify voters registered in multiple states.

Significance to the improvement of the operation of government

The redesigned site has transformed the office into a 24 hour-a-day, 7 days a week information and business portal. Whether in Kentucky or across the globe, constituents may access necessary information at anytime and utilize necessary online services as needed. The convenience has been noted by many users, and has made the office more approachable and user-friendly. Also, access to live filings or records clerks has improved due to the decreased demand of their time. The site is now a one-stop shop for many of the state's most popular services. It also provides many services that other agencies may utilize to increase their productivity and efficiency. In addition, the accuracy of service has been increased.

Benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agency or state.

In addition to the office being accessible by constituents at any time, the site also includes six different language translations so that the site is accessible to visitors from other countries, not only making the site more user-friendly, but also expanding economic development opportunities.

Also, the turnaround time for documents has decreased dramatically and has created a substantial difference in the assistance that filing and records clerks can provide to constituents.

The office has also saved significant resources in staff time. For instance, since the launch of the online UCC filings database, the staff has been reduced by more than 80 percent to only four filing clerks. Other online services have generated similar results. There has also been a dramatic decrease in the amount of paper waste generated by the office, which further increases office savings. The office is more efficient and more effective thanks to the new site and services.

Realized return on investment, short-term/long-term payback (include summary calculations)

The return on investment to this point has certainly been met. With a programming team of 1.5 full-time equivalent staff and one person who is responsible for the actual formatting and content of the site, the costs to the office were minimal. The savings in staff time for one year alone makes the site beneficial and an extremely good investment. Nearly one third of the office's

staff has been eliminated through attrition, due to the increased efficiency the Web site generated.

In the short term, there has been a reduction of staff, a savings in costs, and improved access to the office. In the long term, users will become more accustomed to the site as well as internet usage in general, leading to an increased demand for the services. That will allow a further savings in staff and expenses.

The increased use of the site and its services point to a significant return on investment. Constituents of the office regularly comment on the usefulness of the site and how it has improved their work environment. Even without the substantial financial savings the site creates, the usefulness to constituents alone is enough return on investment to warrant the project.