

A) Description of project, including length of time in operation:

The Alabama Board of Nursing's (ABN) group online license status check service provides a first of its kind technology that creates efficiencies in state government, brings benefits to health care providers across the state and helps to ensure the well-being of those seeking medical treatment in Alabama. The service allows health care employers to obtain up to date information concerning the license status of their employees and gain the confidence that their nursing staff is properly licensed and without disciplinary action at all times.

The service utilizes Internet-based, "push" technology. Once signed up for the service through an annual subscription, health care facilities enter the license numbers of nurses they employ or are interested in employing into a Web-based interface. This creates an "e-roster" of license holders the institution wishes to follow. The service then continually monitors the license status of all selected individuals. If a nurse's status changes, the service will automatically send an email to the administrators of the subscribing facility detailing the status change. The e-roster also doubles as the health care institution's annual nursing employee submission, a roster of employees required by the Alabama Board of Nursing. Once a nurse is entered into the system, their information is automatically relayed to the Board of Nursing's database.

To best accommodate users, the Board developed four different subscriber service levels based on different needs for license information. Level 1 subscribers receive a condensed status check with licensee information and current status, while subsequent levels add historical reporting, disciplinary action, advance practice status and prescriptive authority information. Non-health care facilities can also be enrolled in the service and allowed to conduct online status checks.

B) Significance to the improvement of the operation of government.

The introduction of this service has created many operational improvements for state government. The primary improvements come from the efficiencies created and savings realized by the Alabama Board of Nursing. Introduction of this service has meant the realization of many new efficiencies for the Board.

The regulatory aspect of the prior system required large amounts of data entry on the part of the Board. Each year, health care providers were required to manually collect, verify, and report to the Board the license numbers of all employed nurses. This information was manually entered and stored by the Board of Nursing in order to create a nursing roster for all health care facilities. If action needed to be taken against a nurse, this information was used to locate the individual and their employer.

Data entry for these purposes took roughly thirty minutes per one hundred licenses to manually enter each nurse's information. With over 64,000 nurses licensed in the State of Alabama, the Board of Nursing's processing time required to enter each nurse into the database amounted to nearly 320 hours, or two entire months of staff time per year. The online license status check service automates this task and reduces the need for Board staff intervention drastically.

Additionally, the service has opened an entirely new level of communication between the Board of Nursing and health care providers across Alabama. Providing employers with up to date license status information reinforces the critical link between health care providers and the Alabama Board of Nursing and ensures health care providers maintain a positive image of their regulatory Board.

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

The online license status check service provides many benefits to the service recipients across Alabama. To reduce liability, it is a necessity that health care providers remain up to date concerning the license status of their employees. If a license is allowed to lapse, or if disciplinary or legal action is taken against a nurse, the employer is liable for any services performed by the license holder during the period in question. For example, one Alabama employer unknowingly employed a nurse who was holding a lapsed license for several months. The result was a reimbursement to a third party of in excess of \$150,000 for services rendered by an unlicensed nurse. Another employer had to write off thousands of dollars in anesthesia charges for the same reason. Had this service been in place the employers would have been notified of the lapsing license and would have had ample time to prepare, alleviating the associated liability.

Before the introduction of the Alabama Board of Nursing's group online license verification service, verifying a nurse's license status was a time consuming and labor intensive process. Health care providers were required to manually collect, verify and report to the Board of Nursing the license numbers of all employed nurses. This information was collected and stored by the Board creating a nursing roster for all health care facilities. With the online license status check service, the once labor-intensive process of manually collecting, verifying and reporting this information has been eliminated. Use of the online service also dramatically simplifies licensure enforcement efforts.

D) Return on investment, short-term/long-term payback (include summary calculations). Projects must exhibit measurable operational benefit.

The online license status check service was developed in partnership with Alabama Interactive, the State's official eGovernment partner, through the innovative self-funded model. Through this model, the application was developed at no cost to taxpayers, state funds or the Alabama Board of Nursing. Rather, the service collects revenue from each online transaction. In addition, the Board of Nursing operates the online license status check service at no cost.

The operational benefits of the online license status check service have been many. For example, health care providers are no longer required to provide manual audit reports to the Board of Nursing. This represents a substantial savings in staff time each year. Also, with the online license status check service participating institutions no longer have the liability associated with unknowingly employing an unlicensed or suspended worker. This results in a potential reduction in liability for health care institutions ranging upwards of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The foremost operational benefit is to public safety. With the online license status check service health care institutions remain up to date on their employees. The service ensures that nurses are no longer able to practice without a current license. The service also ensures that the high standards of care that Alabamians have come to expect from their hospitals and other health care facilities will not be undermined. For the citizens of Alabama, this service could quite literally be "a life saver."

Finally, the operational benefits to the Alabama Board of Nursing have been tremendous. By electronically collecting health care worker information for the over 64,000 nurses licensed in the State of Alabama, the Alabama Board of Nursing has the potential to save nearly two

months of staff processing and data entry time. This allows Board staff to concentrate on their core, value added services and promoting public safety.