

**National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO)
2003 Recognition Award Nomination**

Title of Nomination: Indiana Accessibility Project

Project/System Manager: Marti Mitchell

Job Title: Director, *accessIndiana*

Agency: NA

Department: NA

Address: 10 West Market Street, Suite 600

City: Indianapolis

State: Indiana

Zip: 46204

Phone: 317.233.8566

Fax: 317.233.2011

Email: mmitchell@www.IN.gov

Category for judging: Accessibility and Participation

Person Nominating: Laura Larimer

Job Title: Chief Information Officer, State of Indiana

Address: Indiana Government Center North, 100 North Senate Avenue, N-551

City: Indianapolis

State: Indiana

Zip: 46204

Phone: 317.232.6750

Fax: 317.232.0748

Email: llarimer@doit.state.in.us

Executive Summary:

Due to the increasing awareness of the needs of people with disabilities, the state of Indiana has embarked on a plan to adopt Section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. This plan will implement accessibility standards within state executive agencies. Legislation passed during the 2003 Indiana legislative session requires that similar plans be developed for the judicial and legislative branches, local government offices and county election boards.

As required by HEA 1926, the Information Technology Oversight Commission (ITOC) formed a group in 2001 to develop standards for assistive technology. The Assistive Technology Standards Group (ATSG) included a state employee with a disability as well as representation from the Civil Rights Commission, the Protection and Advocacy Commission, the Division of Disability, Aging and Rehabilitation Services, Indiana Interactive, Inc., the Procurement Division and Assistive Technology Through Action in Indiana (ATAIN). The group decided to adopt the federal Section 508 standards.

On August 13, 2002, ITOC approved a policy for assistive technology standards recommended by the ASTG. This policy covers all information technology (IT) procurements and identifies how assistive technology standards are to be used to procure IT products and services. If the agency is not able to meet compliance requirements by August 15, 2003, plans for meeting these standards are due to ITOC by November 15, 2003.

According to these standards, any equipment, software or system to be specifically used by a disabled state employee requires immediate modification. Should that necessary modification be unattainable, an alternative means for accessibility must be provided for the employee. If however, the IT equipment, software and services are for use by the general public, compliance with these standards is necessary only when the system is replaced, significantly modified or overhauled. If the technology is not anticipated to be replaced within one year from the date the policy was published, the agency must submit their plan for compliance. A waiver must be obtained from ITOC before a special procurement may be awarded for products or services that are commercially unavailable or place an undue burden upon the agency.

The ATSG also meets regularly with state Webmasters to monitor progress with state Web sites' compliance with accessibility standards. The task of addressing accessibility is not taken lightly in Indiana. With over 20% of Americans having some level of disability, the importance of this project is at a very high level. Additionally, ITOC and the ATSG have been working to provide training and tools to assist each agency in their compliance efforts.

With the backing of Indiana legislators, meeting the needs of constituents and staff with disabilities will be the norm, rather than a luxury. The benefits of assistive technology will be wide reaching for disabled Hoosiers as the barriers for working with or for state and local governments decrease. Disabled citizens will be able to perform many more tasks, such as easily reading information and interacting with their Indiana government through the state Web portal and renewing their license plate at a state kiosk. By providing easier access to government information and services for disabled citizens, the demand on the brick-n-mortar locations will decrease. Additionally, government employees will be able to do their jobs more quickly and easily since Section 508 compliant Web pages will be easily accessed by disabled citizens through assistive technology, thus improving efficiencies across the state.

Description of project, including length of time in operation:

The state of Indiana wanted to identify ways to improve its interactions with disabled state employees and citizens. The Indiana Accessibility Plan was to include a way to comply with the Federal 508 standards while improving services to both citizens and employees. In 2001, HEA 1926 paved the way for the state to define and implement a plan within the executive branch of state government. This act required the Information Technology Oversight Commission (ITOC) to appoint a group of individuals charged with adopting assistive technology standards consistent with the principles and goals contained in the federal statute requiring computers and other electronic equipment to be accessible to disabled government employees and citizens.

The Assistive Technology Standards Group (ATSG), which was formed by ITOC as outlined in HEA 1926, created the Indiana Accessibility Plan. Once the working group was formed, they were tasked with helping ITOC develop standards compatible with principles and goals for electronic and information technology accessibility as defined under Section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The guidelines defined by the ATSG include coverage of the following:

- Existing equipment, software or systems
 - Software applications and operating systems
 - Web based applications
 - Telecommunications products
 - Video and multi-media products
 - Self-contained or closed products
 - Desktops and portable computers
 - Functional performance
- IT procurement
- Public access
 - *accessIndiana*, the state's official Web portal
 - Kiosks
 - Interactive terminals
- Other electronics

With the guidelines developed and the policy approved on August 13, 2002, the plan was rolled out to state agency heads and MIS directors on August 30, 2002.

The policy required that equipment, software or systems specifically used by a state employee with a disability be immediately modified to comply with the standards. If immediate modifications were unattainable, an alternative solution was to be provided. If the technologies were not used by a disabled employee, compliance to these standards is not necessary until the system is replaced, significantly modified or overhauled.

Also, the policy required that IT equipment, software and services used by the public must comply with the standards when replaced, significantly modified or overhauled. Agencies not anticipating replacing technologies within one year from the date the policy was published had to forward their plans for accomplishing this task to ITOC by November 15, 2002.

Lastly, accessibility compliance must be at least 10% of the total evaluation criteria for request for proposals and a requirement for all bids and quotations unless the product or service is commercially unavailable or places an undue burden on the agency. In this case, the agency must get a waiver approved by ITOC before a special procurement may be awarded.

The ATSG created a sub-group called the Web Accessibility Implementation Group (WAIG), which draws members from the state Webmaster's Group. The WAIG defined three of their top priorities:

- Priority 1 consisted of policy education, compliance plan criteria development, standard solutions recommendation and priority setting
- Priority 2 focused on Web accessibility tools analysis
- Priority 3 addressed procurement and choosing an accessibility compliance icon for branding purposes

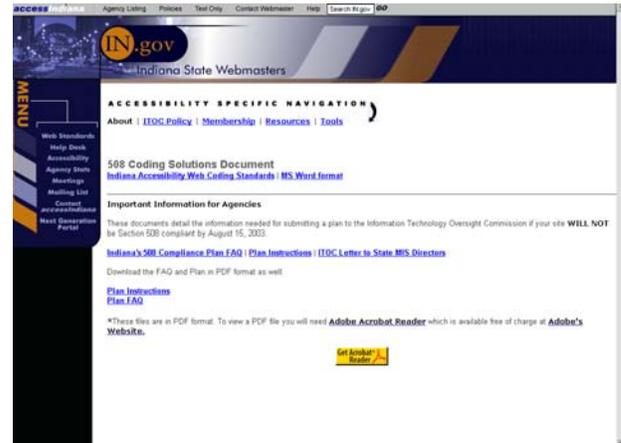
ITOC outlined roles and responsibilities for not just Webmasters but also the ATSG. The ATSG, with the assistance of the WAIG, accomplished the following goals:

- Publish Instructions to the Web - October 25, 2002
- Complete Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) – November 1, 2002
- Publish FAQ's to the Web site – November 8, 2002

- Complete the Indiana 508 coding solutions - January 23, 2003
- Publish coding solutions to the Web site – January 30, 2003

The Web site was developed to provide easy access to the ITOC policies, standards, resources and tools. Tools to assist the state Webmasters in addressing accessibility issues with their sites as well as all state assistive technology standards were incorporated into the state Webmaster's Web site, available at <http://www.IN.gov/webmasters/accessibility/>

The plan and progress of the ATSG and the Webmasters has been communicated by ITOC on a regular basis. So far, three presentations have been given to state employees: one was to the ITOC Commission in August 2002, one was to the entire Webmasters' group in September 2002, and an update was given at an IT Forum in March 2003.



These groups continue to make progress as they strive to improve government interaction with disabled employees and citizens. Presently, a tool is being identified to assist agencies with the identification of Web sites non-compliant with accessibility standards. The ATSG has narrowed the candidates being considered to HiSoftware and Crunchy, primarily because of their ability to integrate with the Websphere portal product being piloted by the state. Additionally, the group is addressing not just accessibility but usability. Since technology can meet accessibility guidelines but still not meet usability guidelines as they relate to the Web, other tools being evaluated include accessibility development tools and screen readers such as JAWS that would be rolled out as a state standard toolkit.

Also, additional legislation was passed by the 2003 Indiana General Assembly to continue with Indiana's efforts to provide assistive technology for the disabled. House Enrolled Act 1724 will require legislative, judicial, and administrative branches of both state and local governments to develop accessibility plans. Enrolled Act 477 requires each county election board to conduct training and educational meetings for precinct election officers in an effort to establish standards for accessible facilities and voting systems by January 2006.

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

By introducing assistive technology and IT procurement standards, the state is opening the doors for current and future disabled employees. Employees will be able to perform their jobs and complete tasks more efficiently, reducing the need for non-technology assistance, giving freedom and satisfaction to the disabled and continuously reducing the frustration that has been a fact of life for many disabled employees.

Disabled citizens are beginning to see new IT equipment and software replaced by assistive technology. This assistive technology will allow disabled citizens to interact with their government 24 x 7, thus reducing the need for disabled citizens to call or visit brick-n-mortar locations.

Even citizens without disabilities stand to benefit from the state Web sites' compliance with accessibility guidelines. Just as curb cuts for wheelchair access are created for disabled citizens but used by others, Web pages made accessible for the disabled will be accessible to anyone searching the Web without a mouse, on a tiny screen or with no screen at all. This means it will be easier for citizens using PDA's and cell phones to search the Web. Using hands-free phones to have Web-based information read to you is also possible with properly constructed, accessible Web pages. Further technology advances will also allow Web pages that adhere to accessibility guidelines and are written in one language to be read in another language.

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

The benefits of the Indiana Accessibility Plan will continue to be realized as more and more of the plan milestones are met. Already, the state has improved the effectiveness of its workforce by providing assistive technology to disabled employees. It is also improving public access to assistive technology. Furthermore, the state is improving employee and citizen access to government services and information by ensuring its Web sites are compliant with accessibility standards, thus eliminating the need for citizens to visit or call state agencies for assistance.

While the state of Indiana will be able to quantify the benefits of its Accessibility Plan in the near future, addressing the needs of the disabled is an ethical obligation that all public and private sector businesses must address without regard for financial returns. As the number of disabled Americans increases, technology advancements are helping break down the barriers that have been so long endured by this growing segment of our population.