

Title of Nomination: The District of Columbia Web Portal Redesign

Project/System Manager: Mr. Jamey Harvey

Title: Director of Egovernment Strategy

Agency: Office of the Chief Technology Officer

Department: Egovernment

Address: One Judiciary Square, 4414th Street, NW , Suite 930 South -

City: Washington

State: DC

Zip: 20001

Phone: (202) 727-0341

Fax: (202)727-6857

Email: jamey.harvey@dc.gov

CATEGORY: Digital_Government_G_to_C

Person Nominating (if different):

Title:

Address:

City:

State: DC

Zip:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

NASCIO 2003 RECOGNITION AWARDS ENTRY
The District of Columbia Web Portal Redesign
Executive Summary

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In early 2003, the District of Columbia conducted a comprehensive expansion and redesign of its government web portal, www.dc.gov. The goal was to provide the District's 575,000 residents, 90,000 businesses, and millions of visitors a faster, easier, and richer avenue to the District's wealth of information and services. The portal redesign project focused on seven key elements:

- **Reorganization** for clarity and ease of use, focusing on three key constituencies – residents, businesses, and visitors
- **Content expansion** to add Kids Capital, an interactive children's site (www.kids.dc.gov), expanded information for visitors, a wide variety of searchable databases, and a new menu of information "About DC," including history, geography, politics, and the arts
- **Application redesign** to ensure that all applications available through the portal provide all essential details about a particular subject or transaction, the information is clear, and all conditions for eligibility to conduct any transaction online are identified at the start
- **Improved navigation, content placement, and design**, including a shift to a needs-based format and moving the most popular sites and services to the "front" via the home page
- **Machine translation** into Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish, plus online city services guides in Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese
- **Personalization** options for customized profiles, newsletters, and messages

SIGNIFICANCE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF GOVERNMENT

The portal redesign helps improve the DC government in several ways:

- **More efficient, effective government services** as a result of additional content, needs-based design, and application redesign
- **Broader reach** through machine translation into seven languages
- **Reduced government costs** as service improvements and translation lead more businesses, residents, and visitors to substitute on-line transactions for in-person visits that require staff and equipment
- **Greater customer satisfaction** through more and easier-to-access information and services
- **Increased tax, and licensure compliance** due to more and easier-to-access information and services
- **Revenue enhancement** as a result of increased tax and licensure compliance
- **Enhanced participation in government** through front-page links to government webcasts and registration for messages and newsletters
- **Support for education and tourism**

BENEFITS FOR SERVICE RECIPIENTS AND TAXPAYERS

The redesigned portal offers numerous benefits for service recipients and taxpayers. The project has made all District services and information – for residents, businesses, and visitors -- easier, faster, and more accessible. The translation feature has opened the wealth of information and services on the portal to hundreds of thousands of new users. The addition of content for visitors, along with the translation feature, has made visiting and navigating the District simpler and more appealing for tourists. The new Kids site is educating and entertaining children of all backgrounds and providing a valuable resource for their parents.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The city's cost for the portal redesign was \$350,000. Since project launch in May 2003, transaction traffic rose 15%. A 15% increase in application traffic will create 380,000 additional online transactions per year, each saving the District an estimated \$1.25 - \$2.25 per site visit in time and material costs that would otherwise be incurred for in-person or phone visits. Thus, the 15% traffic increase will yield \$475,000-\$855,000 annually in savings, representing an annual ROI of 137%-244%.

NASCIO 2003 RECOGNITION AWARDS ENTRY

The District of Columbia Web Portal Redesign

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Comprehensive Redesign and Expansion

In early 2003, the District of Columbia conducted a comprehensive expansion and redesign of its government web portal, www.dc.gov. The goal was to provide the District's 575,000 residents, 90,000 businesses, and millions of visitors a faster, easier, and richer avenue to the District's wealth of information and services. The portal redesign project, completed in early May 2003, focused on seven key elements:

Reorganization for clarity and ease of use. Recognizing that the portal serves three broad constituencies with overlapping, but distinct needs and interests, the team reorganized portal content for these three groups – residents, businesses, and visitors. The redesigned home page now features top tabs labeled “Residents,” “Businesses,” and “Visitors,” with drop-down menus that provide the full array of information and services available for each group. Matching side bar links direct the user to information organized the same way – “Living and Working in DC,” “Doing Business in DC,” and “Visiting DC.”

Content expansion. The project team significantly expanded content on the portal, particularly to serve previously unserved or underserved constituencies, including children and visitors. As a result, the portal continues to offer hundreds of on-line transactions and thousands of pages of information for residents, businesses, and visitors, but now also provides new District-created content and new links to non-District-created information. Major new content additions include:

- *A new site just for kids.* Few, if any, municipal web portals offer sites just for children. To introduce the District's 70,000-plus children, and countless more visiting children, to the city and to e-learning, we developed Kids Capital, <http://kids.dc.gov>, an interactive children's site. Kids Capital features games, biographies of major historical figures such as Abraham Lincoln, and fun facts about the city and its history. Colorful animated figures representing the Mayor, sports heroes, and historical giants introduce information to make learning stimulating and fun. The site is easy to navigate, even for a novice “e-learner” – beginning with the colorful, specially designed “Kids” tab on the home page.
- *Expanded information for visitors,* who can now use the site to find maps of the city, learn how to use the District's world-class public transportation system, Metro, make hotel reservations, identify which of the city's thousands of historical and cultural attractions they want to visit, and plan how and when to visit them.
- *Searchable databases* for a wide variety of uses– such as DC laws and regulations, property sales, land use records, meeting facilities, unclaimed property inventories, and lists of local small and disadvantaged businesses.

“About DC,” a new source of information covering history, geography, politics, and the arts.

Application redesign. We redesigned all applications available through the portal to ensure that they provide all essential details about a particular subject or transaction, the information is clear, and all possible questions and ambiguities are addressed through definitions, links, and pop-ups. A particular focus of the application redesign effort was transactional applications. Here, we structured the applications to identify at the start all conditions for eligibility to conduct the transaction on-line (e.g., an unexpired driver’s license), so that a user does not waste time starting a transaction, only to abort later due to ineligibility. In addition, we identified the number of steps in each transaction at the start and at each step, so that the user always knows where she/he is in the process and how many steps remain.

Improved navigation, content placement, and design. The project reorganized the entire portal format from an agency-oriented format that required site visitors to know which city agency or other entity (e.g., Metro) offered their desired services to a needs-based format that allows a visitor to click directly to the desired service, regardless of which entity offers it. At the same time, we redesigned all District-based sites that can be reached through the portal to have common headers, footers, and organization. Now a visitor who uses just one site will feel instantly comfortable with any other site he/she visits and can navigate it with ease. We also redesigned pages by adding white space to enhance clarity and visibility. Most importantly, we redesigned the home page to bring more content to the “front” of the portal, making most-used and most-popular features accessible instantly rather than through a multiple-step pathway. New “up-front” features of the home page include:

- Scrollable menus of all available e-services, online forms, and searchable databases
- Additional menus that list the “Most Popular On-line Services” and “Featured Sites,” selected and revised regularly by software that tracks site usage
- Tabs for “Alerts,” “News in DC,” and “Events” that take the visitor directly to sources of up-to-the-minute information
- A link to the “Register with DC” feature, which allows visitors to sign up to receive news, event listings, and closure information via email
- A direct link to webcasts of DC government events such as City Council hearings, School Board meetings, public symposia, and more

Translation. Increasingly, Washington, DC is a city of immigrants from Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America – and the city has always been a major tourist destination, dependent on tourism for jobs and public revenue. A major element of the portal redesign was the addition of translation services for a total of 11 languages. For seven languages that machine translation software performs very accurately – Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish – the portal now offers machine translation of all site content, so a user can translate any page into his/her language at the click of a mouse. In four languages that machine translation software performs unreliably – Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese – the site offers hand-translated online city services guides.

Personalization. The newly revamped portal has a personalization feature that allows the visitor to customize certain information and services to fit his/her needs. Personalization features include:

User-selected registration profiles that can be changed at any time

E-newsletters customized for the individual

The capability to customize messages based on the visitor's self-selected profile

Outreach. Every element of the portal redesign project was based on information gleaned in a citywide outreach campaign. The project team conducted focus groups throughout the city to elicit the needs, interests, and concerns of residents, businesses and visitors and ensure that the site would be as accessible and useful as possible for all.

Hardware and Software

The redesigned portal redesigned runs on the standard District of Columbia server, with the following specifications:

- Base Unit: PowerEdge 1650,Pentium III-T, 1.4GHz,512K Cache, Base (220-8606)
- Processor: 2nd Processor, Pentium III,1.4G512K Cache,PowerEdge1650 (311-1585)
- Memory: 2GB SDRAM,133MHz,2X1GB DIMMS (311-1294)
- Video Memory: PCI Riser,2x64/66,for Dell PowerEdge 1650 (430-0288)
- Hard Drive: 3 X 73GB 10K RPM Ultra 160 SCSI Hard Drive (340-3884)
- Hard Drive Controller: Raid on Motherboard,PERC3-DI, 128MB, With Documentation, for Dell PowerEdge 1650 (340-3605)
- Operating System: Windows 2000 Server,5 Client Access Licenses,English,4GB Partition (420-0236)
- Operating System: Dell OpenManage Kit,32-Bit (310-1261)
- NIC: Dual On-Board NICS ONLY (430-8991)
- CD-ROM or DVD-ROM Drive: 24X IDE Internal CD-ROM,Black,for Dell PowerEdge (313-0317)
- Sound Card: Bezel Option for Dell PowerEdge 1650 (313-0868)
- Speakers: 3 Bay SCSI Hard Drive Backplane, (1in only), PowerEdge 1650 (311-1586)
- Option 1: MR5,ROMB 5,C4, for Dell PowerEdge 1650 (340-3608)
- Option 2: Rapid Rails for Dell Rack, PowerEdge 1650 (310-1354)
- Misc: Power Supply,275W,AC,Redundantfor Dell PowerEdge 1650 (310-1358)

The principal software used in the comprehensive portal redesign was Active Server Pages (ASP) for dynamic applications and Dynamic Site Framework (DSF) for content management. Third party software products include Ask Jeeves for search, WorldLingo for translation, GovDocs for email alerts, and WebTrends for traffic measurement.

SIGNIFICANCE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF GOVERNMENT

More efficient, effective services. The portal redesign project is dramatically improving the efficiency and effectiveness of District government services. Through the needs-based re-formatting of the site and the transfer of the most popular and most-used services and sites to the front, via the home page, the project has made all District services and information far more accessible and has shortened the pathways to the completion of all transactions. The content redesign also makes all service transactions easier and faster.

Broader reach. The translation feature opens the doors of e-government to a large new population – all residents, business owners, and visitors whose first language is any of the seven we now translate.

Reduced government costs. By improving in service efficiency and effectiveness, and reaching a much broader user population, the newly revamped portal is sharply increasing the numbers of businesses, residents, and visitors who substitute on-line transactions and information searches for visits or phone calls to District government centers. Since the new portal's launch in early May 2003, on-line registrations have increased 492% and transaction traffic has increased by 15%. The shift to e-government reduces the District's costs for customer service personnel time and equipment.

Greater customer satisfaction. In addition, the substitution of on-line services for in-person services allows the customer – a resident, business, or visitor – to obtain the service at the time and place of his/her choosing, and without traveling, waiting, or even dressing. In addition, the content redesign, aimed at ensuring the accuracy and completeness of all content, makes the information available through the new portal more consistently reliable than information obtained in-person.

Increased compliance. By making certain transactions, such as tax and ticket payments and business licensing, simpler, faster, and more convenient, and by reaching residents and visitors who are not comfortable using English, the new portal is enhancing compliance with the District's tax, motor vehicle, and business laws and regulations.

Revenue enhancement. By encouraging tax and licensure compliance, as well as tourism, the new portal is helping the District increase its collections of personal, business, and tourism-related taxes and fees.

Enhanced participation in government. Through features such as the front-page links to government webcasts and registration for messages and newsletters, as well as the new translation services, the revamped portal attracts and encourages broader participation in city government.

Support for education. Through the Kids site and translation, which together provide a wealth of information to children from many nationalities and every location and economic background, the redesigned portal is helping children learn and enjoy learning, thus supporting the educational efforts of parents and schools.

Attraction for tourists. By offering new and easier-to-navigate information and services for tourists from the United States and abroad, the new portal is helping to attract more tourists to the nation's capital and thus helping to increase tourism-based tax revenues.

BENEFITS FOR SERVICE RECIPIENTS AND TAXPAYERS

The redesigned portal offers numerous benefits for service recipients and taxpayers. As noted above, through needs-based re-formatting, up-front service and database placement, and content redesign, the project has made all District services and information – for residents, businesses, and visitors -- easier, faster, and more accessible. The translation feature has opened the wealth of information and services on the portal to hundreds of thousands of new users. The addition of content for visitors, along with the translation feature, has made visiting and navigating the District simpler and more appealing for tourists. The new Kids site is educating and entertaining children of all backgrounds and providing a valuable resource for their parents.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The city's total cost for the portal redesign was \$350,000. Since the launch of the new portal in early May 2003, transaction traffic rose 15%. A 15% increase in application traffic will create 380,000 additional online transactions per year. Each time a visitor uses a transactional application instead of the phone, fax, mail or an in-person visit, the city saves an estimated \$1.25-\$2.25 in time and materials. Thus, assuming very conservatively that there will be no further increase in traffic to the site, the District will save 380,000 x (\$1.25-\$2.25), or \$475,000-\$855,000 annually, earning an annual ROI of 136%-244% and recouping its entire original investment in less than one year.