Nomination Form

May 23, 2003 extension to deadline granted.

Title of Nomination: State Unit on Aging Website

Project/System Manager: Linda Calvert
Job Title: Senior Services Specialist
Department: **West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services**
Address: 1900 Kanawha Blvd., East, Holly Grove, Bldg. 10
City: Charleston
State: West Virginia
Zip: 25305-0160
Phone: 304-558-3317
Fax: 304-5585609
Email: lcalvert@boss.state.wv.us

Category for judging: **Accessibility**

Person Nominating: Charles E. Smith
Job Title: Senior Technology Officer, Governor's Office of Technology
Address: 505 Capitol Street
City: Charleston
State: West Virginia
Zip: 25301
Phone: 304-558-3784
Fax: 304-558-0136
Email: csmith@wvgot.org

2003 NASCIO RECOGNITION AWARDS

West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services
Web Site

(Accessibility & Participation)

Executive Summary

The West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services, part of the Governor's Cabinet, is the lead agency for programs serving the aging population in West Virginia. Its Web site was launched in February 2000 and contains a wealth of information on programs and services available to older West Virginians in all 55 counties. It was the State of West Virginia's featured Web site during Older Americans Month in May 2000 and received an award from the Governor's Office.

The Bureau's Web site was redesigned in December 2001 with features to better serve senior citizens and others seeking information about the many services provided. The Bureau contracted with Kaplan & Sinko, a Web-Site Design and E-Commerce Solutions Company, to create a Web site that would be senior friendly, as well as accessible to the visually impaired. It was the Bureau's goal to meet the standards as outlined in the following statement by West Virginia Governor Bob Wise: "A blind or visually-impaired person should have equal access to any state Web site that a sighted person can read."

Features of the Bureau's Web site that are in keeping with the goal of access for the visually impaired are the ability to enlarge the text from normal to large and then even larger to giant text. There is also a site map for text-based navigation available from the home page.

The ability to search the text by entering a key word was added to help visitors quickly find needed information. A list of Frequently Asked Questions, with references to the appropriate Web pages with more detailed information, became part of the newly designed Web site. Other updates included the capability to add banners to the home page highlighting upcoming events open to the public, such as the annual Governor's Summit on Aging, and to draw immediate attention to grant opportunities for agencies that serve the aging population. Adobe Acrobat technology was added to provide the ability to post newsletters, brochures, manuals, state plans, and other documents. The Bureau's Web site is built with intuitive content management screens, allowing Bureau staff to easily make additions and updates and post current data without outside involvement.

a) Description of Project, Including Length of Time in Operation

This Web site was built using cold fusion technology. This technology provides staff of the West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services with the capability to manage its own Web site, thereby keeping it current without the involvement of the Web site design company that created it.

The redesigned dynamic Web site has been in operation since December 2001. It was redesigned with a variety of new features. However, the features for which the site is being nominated under the Accessibility & Participation category are its accessibility for the blind and visually handicapped in particular, plus the availability of an online Golden Mountaineer Discount Card application that can be submitted electronically for processing.

The Bureau of Senior Services provides services funded through the Older Americans Act and is the premier advocate for the provision of in-home and community-based services for the state's seniors and others served by its programs. Individuals age 60 and over make up the fastest growing group of people using computers and searching for information on the World Wide Web. The older population often experiences age-associated problems with vision that may hinder their use of computers. Thus, it was the Bureau's goal to design a Web site that would be "senior friendly" and even more accessible to all adults.

There were some features on the Bureau's original Web site that, according to research, can make it difficult for older adults to use Web sites, such as automatically scrolling text. Such features were removed, and features that would enhance usability were added, i.e., the capacity to enlarge the text to either large or giant, as many older adults prefer 14-point type for text. A text-based menu was added -- available through only one click from the home page. The Bureau had its Web site reviewed for usability by a blind staff person at West Virginia University who served on the Statewide Internet Group. He rated it high in both accessibility and content.

Although the ability to electronically submit an application for the Golden Mountaineer Discount Card was added to the Web site, contact information which includes addresses and telephone numbers are listed for those who may prefer to speak with someone about the discount card rather than apply online. The online Golden Mountaineer Discount Card application allows Bureau staff to not only view and process applications, but also to store them in a database.

For the convenience of West Virginians who have the Golden Mountaineer Discount Card, the Web site also provides lists of both pharmacies and merchants that accept this card, including addresses. Telephone numbers will be added soon.

Other features, in addition to those listed above, that enhance usability are ease of navigation; search text by keyword; banners on the home page that provide quick access with just one click to timely information; the use of Adobe Acrobat to provide newsletters, annual reports, and other documents online; a direct link on the home page to the state home page with access to all West Virginia government agencies; and a narrative on the home page about various programs and activities that is kept current.

b) Significance to the Improvement of the Operation of Government

Creating a Web site that is user friendly for older adults is extremely important, as more and more computer users are older adults. The numbers of seniors is steadily increasing as the Baby Boom generation ages, and they will be using the Internet to seek out services. However, adults who are older than the Baby Boomer generation are already going online to seek out information on health and aging. They can also find contact information to secure services they may need.

State Units on Aging can be more effective in reaching out to those wishing to learn about and take advantage of their services by having attractive and easy to use Web sites. An older adult may feel more comfortable searching for needed information on the Internet rather than discussing problems or concerns with someone. On the Bureau's Web site, seniors can learn about programs and services offered (in large text if desired) and then, if needed, contact a staff person in any county in the state through e-mail addresses or telephone numbers listed on the site. Often, they can even link to local county programs that have their own Web sites.

Providing a Web site that meets accessibility standards for those with disabilities and that provides an online application for a pharmaceutical and merchant discount card certainly contributes to the efficient and effective operation of government as it strives to meet the needs of our state's citizens. A link to all state agencies directly from the Bureau's home page to the state home page enables those visiting the Bureau's Web site to have direct access to any government agency they may need with one click of a mouse.

c) Benefits Realized by Service Recipients, Taxpayers, Agency or State

Service recipients benefit greatly from this improved Web site, as the most common physiological change with aging is a change in vision. The ability to increase text size to large or giant by the simple click of a mouse is extremely beneficial to older adults. Further, the text-based menu provides access for those who are blind or who have severe vision impairments.

The availability of health and other aging related information on Web sites assists older adults in making decisions about their health care and in finding support when they need it. Access to this information on the Bureau's Web site, which has links to many other helpful resources, has the potential to help senior citizens avoid major disabilities through prevention, early treatment, and supportive services.

Individuals with Golden Mountaineer Discount cards can peruse the Bureau's Web site to locate pharmacies and merchants accepting this discount card, which they can apply for online.

Taxpayers benefit due to the decreased cost of mailings, as many documents, including a newsletter focusing on proper nutrition and our annual report, are now posted online. This reduction in the number of large mailings is also more efficient for the agency due to a small staff with a wide variety of responsibilities.

All visitors to the Bureau's site benefit from the time-saving text search feature and the list of Frequently Asked Questions. Aging network professionals, including staff members of the Bureau, have quick and easy access to a wide variety of program and contact information that assists them in carrying out daily job responsibilities through use of the improved site. The fly-out navigation allows visitors to quickly find what they are looking for, too. The simple text-based navigational menu is available for those who are visually impaired. Web sites are a valuable tool for reaching out and providing services to the public. As such, they must be attractive and easy to use for everyone.

d) Return on Investment, Short-Term/Long- Term Payback (Include Summary Calculations). Projects Must Exhibit Measurable Operational Benefit

The Bureau's Web site showed a marked increase in the number of hits after the Golden Mountaineer Discount Card application was made available online. In 2002, West Virginia seniors saved over $4 million by

using the prescription discount that Governor Wise added to the Golden Mountaineer Discount Card. The number of seniors using the card for prescriptions increased almost every month, rising from 13,000 in October 2001, to 17,000 seniors in October 2002. The average discount per prescription was 18%, and the average savings per prescription was $7. Part of this can be attributed to the online availability of the application for the card and the participating pharmacy and merchant lists. One of the top search phrases used to locate the Bureau's Web site is "Golden Mountaineer Discount Card."

Through the addition of Adobe Acrobat technology, documents helpful to the public and requested by the aging network have now been added online, thus decreasing mailing costs.

The fact that this Web site is built with intuitive content management screens that allow Bureau staff to easily update it via an administrative menu accessible with passwords saves costs. This capability has greatly reduced the amount of funds spent on Web site maintenance. It is also much more efficient in terms of time.

The number of hits on the Bureau's Web site is increasing. For the month of April 2003 (the latest statistics available), the total number of hits was 59,153. The average number of hits per day was 1,971. Total page views was 22,707.   For the month of April 2002, the total number of hits was 50,748, with the average number of hits per day at 1,691. The number of page views was 12,723.

The Bureau of Senior Services is pleased to have a Web site designed with the needs of the older population it serves as the major focus. Web sites are an ongoing process. It is a priority of the Bureau to ensure that its Web site evolves with any new technology that will positively affect usability.