National Association of State Chief Information Officers

Nomination for 2007 Recognition Awards for Outstanding Achievement
in the Field of Information Technology

1.   **Nomination Form**

Title of Nomination: **State of Idaho Records Inventory Tracking System (RITS)**

Project/System Manager: Bobbi Eckerle

Title: Administrator

Agency: Division of Purchasing

Department   **Idaho Department of Administration**

Address: 5569 Kendall Street

City/State/Zip: Boise, ID 83720-0075

Phone: 208-332-1604

Fax: 208-327-7320

E-Mail: bobbi.eckerle@adm.idaho.gov

Category of Judging: **Digital Government: Government to Government (G to G)**

Person Nominating: Bill Farnsworth

Title: State Web Services Coordinator

Agency: Information Technology Resource Management Council

Address: 650 West State Street

City/State/Zip: Boise, ID 83720-0003

Phone: 208 332-1878

Fax: 208 334-2307

E-Mail: bill.farnsworth@itrmc.idaho.gov

2.   Executive Summary

In support of the State of Idaho Information Technology Strategic Plan, the State's Records Center successfully implemented a Records Inventory Tracking System (RITS) during 2005 enabling state government agencies to more effectively and efficiently manage approximately 45,000 boxes of records and documents stored in the state's records repository facility.

RITS is a secure on-line system that allows agencies the ability to conduct transactions on-line, and supports today's strategic IT enterprise approach of integrating common functions and computing elements into a shared infrastructure delivering "utility-like" services for agency use. Utility-like services from a common enterprise infrastructure frees resources for agencies to build applications and services that reflect their core competencies while meeting constituent demands.

Prior to implementation of this system, all of inventory activities had been manually tracked and reconciled. Through this system, agency customers can now submit storage box content information for new boxes coming into the records center. The system also allows customers to request items for check out, return, or disposal. From these requests, the system automatically generates documentation for center staff, tracks activities, and initiates billings and monthly billing reports.

Agency users are finding the new system user-friendly and one that is designed to instill user confidence so that it is well used to improve overall record management for the state. RITS also simplifies the retrieval process and reduces delivery time, and incorporates access controls to insure there is no unauthorized viewing or actions.

The development and implementation of RITS demonstrates the successful outcome of collaborative efforts; and represents a milestone in the State of Idaho's efforts to improve records management among all areas of state government through establishment of uniformity in standards, guidelines, retention policies, security, etc.

Idaho citizens and businesses expect their state government to effectively utilize present technologies or deploy those applications necessary to provide timely service, allow agencies to focus on their core business, and maximize taxpayer dollars.

Idaho's RITS project is meeting all these expectations.

3. **Written Justification (a through d)**

a) **Clearly stated title:**

Records Inventory Tracking System (RITS)

b) **Business problem and solution:**

In 1989, the Idaho Record Center opened its doors for business. Offering state agencies the opportunity for economical, organized storage of inactive business documents in a warehouse environment, the operation has evolved and expanded to where it now stores over 45,000 boxes of records mix of permanent and temporary records due to their active status, that is, the frequency of retrieval), 9,000 computer back up tapes and cartridges, several thousand rolls of microfilm, and thousands of microfiche.

Since its beginning, tracking of the records stored in the facility has been a manual process. In its role as caretaker of the records, agencies routinely check out a single file or box and return it to storage. The manual inventory controls track the storage and retrieval activities, then compiles chargeback information for each agency for the services the center provides.

One of the biggest challenges of the manual system was to identify boxes that had reached their retention requirements, and also to provide an accurate inventory for each agency. A better way was needed to control the inventory, provide more accurate reports, and reduce valuable staff time to maintain the boxes. The Center handles about 100 requests for retrieval a day – by phone, email, or fax. An on-line inventory tracking system was identified as the best approach.

In 1998, the Department of Administration formed a Records Management Task Force with the charge to develop an overall records management policy, statute and plan for the State of Idaho. The vision of the group, representing a collaborative effort by 15 major agencies, was to enable access to public records through a records management system designed for consistency across the various areas of state government.

A key strategy of the task force was also to ensure adequate, cost effective space for records storage requirements for state agencies by maximizing storage availability in existing space and to implement immediate procedures to begin to properly identify records retention limits for storage boxes.

A major outcome of this initiative resulted in the development and ultimate implementation in 2005 of RITS. The new system was developed in-house in the following four phases:

Phase 1:
Record Center completed a wall to wall physical inventory. This verified box content and agency ownership with the transfer documents on file for each box.

Phase 2:
Bring together the main agencies that utilize services provided by the Record Center; discuss the conceptual plans for RITS, gain input and buy-in from the users. Create relational database tables and create programs. Convert existing transfer lists from paper to electronic format.

Phase 3:
Populate database with information pertaining to existing inventory items. Continue programming and testing. Continue to convert existing transfer lists from paper to electronic format.   RITS was built with an eye towards being able to customize and work with existing systems throughout the customer base without duplicating processes.

Phase 4:
Complete the conversion of existing transfer lists from paper to electronic format. Train agency users and roll out the production version of RITS. On an ongoing basis, records center personnel market the program through regular training sessions. In addition, a PowerPoint presentation on the system is used to explain RITS development and operations before various stakeholders involved in records management.

RITS Hardware/Software
RITS is a web-based enterprise level inventory tracking and billing system. It was built with Cold Fusion programming; the database resides on a MS SQL server, and operates in real time. Customers are able to submit check in/out requests online; Record Center receives the requests from RITS and processes the order. The system provides monthly activity and chargeback reports.

Department of Administration staff maintains two separate instances of both end user and management applications. One application is used specifically for training, and the other for real-time production. The procedure is to train customers via the training site, then bring them to live production after a short orientation period.

d)   Public value of the project; benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agencies of the state; realized return on investment, short-term/long-term payback, cost-avoidance

As previously mentioned, the Records Center currently stores and manages over 45,000 boxes (mix of permanent and temporary records due to their active status, that is, the frequency of retrieval). This database documents the agency of origin, record types and box quantities stored in the facility while assigning id numbers that track the box to a shelf location. Another function of the database is tracking the retention period of each box of records.

Access to RITS is hierarchical with privileges to view and edit the entries for an agency set in advance (password protected), providing security of this index database. A notable benefit of this database is the capability it provides for preparing box content indexes, to the item level, to improve the ability of an agency and the Records Center to retrieve records they have stored there. With the system's online retrieval request capability, response time is greatly improved.

Staff Resource Savings Anticipated:

Once the RITS database is fully populated, extensive savings in staff resources are anticipated within the Record Center in areas of chargeback responsibilities and the ability for center staff to search for and retrieve records for our customers. RITS is providing a consistent inventory control mechanism across state agency lines—several agencies are dropping their internal tracking methods once they are in live production with RITS.

RITS Customer Testimonials:

"RITS is a very user friendly program. Most state employees are use to the paper trail and some have been reluctant to change. However, once they start using RITS, they realize how easy it is to use. Within hours of completing the record storage request, there is usually someone here to pick up the boxes. I am one of the lucky ones that became a State employee after the RITS database was initialized. I cannot even imagine using the old system for record storage."

-- Tina Kinne, Division of Medicaid, Department of Health and Welfare

"The RITS system has greatly improved the management of the Department of Water Resources non-current records. The Department and its records managers now have an accurate and easily accessible view of off site records. This helps to promote more active retention review and disposal. It also simplifies the retrieval process and reduces delivery time. The system also good access controls to insure that there is no unauthorized viewing or actions. This system was designed to instill user confidence so that it is well used to improve overall record management."

-- John Hammond, Support Services Manager, Department of Water Resources

"RITS is much quicker and more accurate than older manual system. I have learned to trust the online system in regards to accuracy of tracking the physical location of boxes or files as well as accuracy of the monthly billing fees. Prior to this online system, I maintained a separate log of all activity with the Records Center to verify charges and changes (for storage, transfer or number of boxes maintained in the Center), the physical location of all materials, and the accuracy of all monthly fee charges. After running a duplicate log for a few months subsequent to the online conversion, I have stopped keeping my own records and now rely solely on the online program. The reliability, accuracy and ease of accessibility of the online system versus the older, manual system have definitely resulted in noticeable time savings to our agency and staff." Other favorable features:

- Quicker pickup with the online system of new boxes and delivery of return requests
- Allows accurate and on-going monitoring and management of agency's retention schedule requirements
- Ability to check online the status of items/boxes returned to the agency increases accurate tracking in our office
- Ability of the online search features allows the agency to search all records by a variety of criteria (dates, item or box descriptions, search strings, etc.) and is exceeding helpful and useful.

-- Lynn Mize, Legal Assistant, Department of Administration Attorney General's Office