

CSG recognizes state Web sites

The Eagle E-Government Awards highlight states that best provide services over the Internet.

BY ED JANAIRO

Georgia, Minnesota, North Carolina and North Dakota are among the award-winning states in The Council of State Governments' Second Annual Eagle E-Government Awards program.

The Internet is drastically changing the way state governments do business. Because of these changes, states can reach out to more people and deliver better service to constituents and businesses. CSG's Eagle E-Government Awards program identifies outstanding e-government initiatives each year and highlights how the states are successfully meeting the growing demand for online government services.

A recent report by the Council for Excellence in Government, a nonprofit organization that promotes good government, shows that 73 percent of Americans think our leaders should make e-government a domestic priority. The Eagle E-Government Awards program reveals that many states already are making great strides in using the Internet to create a more responsive and accessible government.

Here are the winners in the categories of Best Executive, Legislative and Judicial Branch Sites, and Best State Portal.

Georgia's Secretary of State Web site (www.sos.state.ga.us) won the Best Executive Branch Web site award with its



North Carolina's NC @ Your Service (www.ncgov.com) took the Best State Portal award.

well-designed home page and wide range of online services offered to people and businesses. Visitors to this site can search for and register corporate names, obtain voter information and voter registration forms, search for registered charities and renew professional licenses online. Other sites that won an Eagle Award of Excellence in the Executive Branch category are Illinois' Criminal Justice Information Authority, Virginia's VATAXOnline, and eMaryland Marketplace. eMaryland Marketplace also won a CSG Innovations award this year (please see accompanying article).

The Best Legislative Branch Web site award went to the **Minnesota State Legislature** (www.leg.state.mn.us). This site offers many valuable features including a bill-status tracking function and live Web casts of legislative sessions. It has an archive of past Internet broadcasts as well as legislative calendars and a wide range of legislative information, including complete biographical and contact information for each legislator. The Alaska State Legislature and the Louisiana Legislature Web sites also won Awards of Excellence in this category.

The Best Judicial Branch Web site

award went to the **North Dakota Supreme Court** (www.court.state.nd.us). This site has a fully searchable database that contains nearly a decade's worth of opinions. A unique feature is the use of hyperlinks in online published opinions, allowing the visitor to easily access related legal sources. Other judicial branch sites winning an Eagle Award are the Arkansas judiciary and Utah state courts sites.

North Carolina's NC @ Your Service (www.ncgov.com) took the Best State Portal award. This site, which has won many awards, employs a citizen-centered design and was lauded for its easy navigability and access to services and information. Its wide range of functions and ability to be personalized make the site suitable for use as a home page by any North Carolinian. The state portals MyCalifornia and New Jersey Home page also received Awards of Excellence in this category.

CSG's Eagle E-Government Awards program is unique in that it focuses on all three branches of state government and relies on a panel of judges who are practitioners in state government. The judges are elected state officials,

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state government staff and CSG's private-sector associates, so the choice of winners reflects the expectations and demands that state government officials and other users have of e-government. The selection of winners also reflects the judges' belief that Internet technology can make state government more accessible and relevant to the lives of its constituents.

Sites were judged on several criteria including ease of use, design, accessibility to the public, technological innovation, and how effectively it streamlines government and delivers better customer service. Judges also reviewed the sites to determine whether they had features essential for good e-government, such as state officials' contact information, foreign-language translations, a help page, a search function, a site index, an alternative text-only site and other features that make it accessible to the disabled.

More information about the Eagle E-Government Awards program and links to the award-winning sites can be found at www.csg.org/eagle. ★

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