



AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

Next-generation state Web portals are here now, bringing people closer to government with more services, new designs and Web 2.0 social media capabilities.

In eGovernment today, Web 2.0 and social media platforms are hot topics. And that's for good reason. Numerous states are revamping their Web portals, giving them popular new features and making them more dynamic for users.

Web 2.0 applications enable video, social networking, wikis, blogs, news feeds, and more. Government is using Web 2.0 to make its portals more like commercial sites, which is what the public wants. People use features like interactive tools, videos and RSS in their everyday online lives. Now government is offering those services, too.

State government portals are packed with transaction-driven services, volumes of information, and beautiful images. Enhanced search capabilities give users instant access to it all. States are also finding innovative ways to use tools like Twitter, the new social networking and micro-blogging service.

But the growth in eGovernment portals isn't just being driven by popular new features; it's also a result of government using technology to serve constituents more effectively. NIC helps 21 states achieve their eGovernment and Web 2.0 goals. "We have always felt that the 'e' in 'eGovernment' stands for 'efficient,'" said Harry Herington, CEO of Kansas-based NIC. "By providing these services online and creating more responsive, real-time solutions for government and those it serves, we are helping states, citizens, and businesses operate more efficiently."

The ultimate benefits are more transparency and better public service. "Web 2.0 provides an interactive channel into government that has not been available before,"

said Herington. He added, however, that Web 1.0 is still the critical foundation that supports Web 2.0 and emerging technologies. Government still needs to provide more basic services online. To that end, NIC maintains a knowledge library of more than 3,900 installed eGovernment services and helped its partner states launch another 400 new applications in 2007.

NIC makes it easy for its state partners to implement innovative eGovernment services through a proven self-funding approach. States pay nothing for the portal infrastructure or development of online services, and modest convenience fees are applied to a limited number of services, most of which support high-volume transactions for regulated industries. Self-funding gives a state a vastly improved Web portal and citizens get more services — all at no upfront cost to taxpayers.

The next-generation portals are here now. States are deploying imaginative services through advanced eGovernment concepts and Web 2.0 tools. And they plan to do more.

A Leader in eGovernment

Innovate. That's what Utah's been doing for years with its state Web portal. Whether it's the latest Web 2.0 technologies or visionary plans for the future, Utah is a leader.





Utah.gov took first place in the state portal category for the 2007 Best of the Web competition. The site also won first place in 2003. Today Utah is still setting the standard for next-generation portals. And other states continue to watch Utah to see what's coming next.

The strength of the state portal was a major factor in Utah's decision to adopt a four-day work week in mid-2008 to cut costs and conserve energy. "That wouldn't have been possible without all of the online services and capabilities that have displaced people having to come into offices to do things," said Utah Chief Technology Officer Dave Fletcher. Thanks to the powerful Web portal, citizens can interact with the state 24/7, making it practical to close state offices on Fridays.

Several hundred government services are available online at Utah.gov, and new features are added regularly. Many of these services are enabled by Web 2.0. "We were one of the first states to use Twitter, for example, to communicate in real time with our citizens," said Fletcher.

The portal highlights the most popular searches, and provides homework help for students. It also offers live chat 24/7 for users with questions. "The live chat is a fairly elaborate system," said Fletcher. "We track the questions that people are asking, and use that information to constantly improve our site by making access to information more intuitive for our users."

In addition, the portal provides Utah Govcast, a multimedia center with numerous video



and audio files, including press conferences, training videos, citizen advisories and more.

The state is working on several plans for the portal's future. This includes a Web 2.0 collaboration plan, which will enable more online interaction with businesses, citizens, and other state and local governments. The portal also will provide centralized access to information on public meetings for 3,000 government entities throughout the state.

Clearly Utah believes in eGovernment, and sees Web 2.0 as a key enabler. "Absolutely," said Fletcher. "I think it will help government interact more effectively with citizens and be more responsive to their needs."

Award-Winning Progress

Virginia.gov ranked first in the state portal category for the 2008 Best of the Web Awards. A new and improved version of the Virginia portal went live in the spring of 2008, with eye-catching images, numerous Web 2.0 features, more information and smoother navigation.

The portal has 26 YouTube channels with more than 100 videos on a variety of topics,

including messages from the governor, tourism, emergency management and transportation. Virginia.gov also provides RSS feeds; podcasts; emergency alerts for hurricanes, wildfires, security incidents and more; and numerous widgets. The widgets are windows with interactive information on road conditions, lottery numbers, state parks and more. They can be easily pulled by users into their own blogs, MySpace and iGoogle Web sites, and Facebook profiles.

It all starts with an attractive home page that makes it easy to see what's available. From there users can quickly move to deeper levels. The portal offers improved interfaces, and is more dynamic and visually appealing than ever before.

In January 2008, Peggy Feldmann was named Virginia's first chief applications officer. She's helping Virginia leverage applications from an enterprise perspective as the state moves forward on numerous initiatives, including more shared services, less paper and an ever-evolving Web presence.

"We're excited about what we're doing with social media," said Feldmann. Future plans include blogs, a portal for users to submit ideas, and other Web 2.0 features. It's all about providing more information for users. "Our goal is to provide citizens with the knowledge of anything and everything about Virginia, both how the commonwealth works in providing services and also what we have to offer to our citizens, and to tourists and anyone else who visits," she said.

The portal improvements reflect Virginia's commitment to both eGovernment and the environment, an approach with numerous



benefits for both the state and its citizens. "We're really working hard to move toward a true eGov perspective," said Feldmann. "Not only from just digitizing the paper we have today, but then moving out of using paper in the future and helping to save trees in the process."

Web 2.0 Makes Connections

The Rhode Island State Council on the Arts fosters public interest and participation in the arts. It's also a liaison between government and Rhode Island's arts community.

A new version of the council's Web site, arts.ri.gov, went live in early 2008, and it aggressively uses Web 2.0 to engage constituents. The site provides a broad variety of information, but it's also a hub for social networking, with connections to the council's presence on MySpace, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

The site also has a blog, RSS feed, chat, and information on artist housing and health care, grants, public art, arts organizations, education, shows, galleries and much more.

Web 2.0 makes perfect sense for the council and its mission. "The arts community itself isn't static," said Randall Rosenbaum, executive director of the council. "We don't just provide unchanging information on an ongoing basis. There is always something new and different happening in our vibrant arts community."

The Web 2.0 approach helps people communicate with each other, add their voices to a discussion and stay abreast of the

various opportunities that come and go in the creative world. "Web 2.0 is absolutely the direction in which we need to head in order to respond to this changeable environment," said Rosenbaum.

If you thought creative people are low-tech and don't go online, think again. "Most of the people we serve and support are incredibly engaged online," noted Rosenbaum. "They are networked and prolific computer users."

People are creating works of art with computers, and sharing those efforts online. They're also using the online tools for basic communication. "We communicate electronically with practically everyone that we serve. There is very little printed communication happening now, which is also good for the

environment," said Rosenbaum. "Everyone we want to have a conversation with is doing so online. That's how we're connecting with our constituents now."

The site is popular with users, but Rosenbaum sees more potential. "I really think we're just scratching the surface here," he said. "To me, the next chapter in all of this is how to really have online conversations and communities, where work can be shared and commented upon, and people can be engaged."

Celebrating Success

Not many Web portals are celebrated with a press conference by the governor — but Nebraska's was. The redesigned Nebraska.gov was launched in June 2008, with Governor Dave Heineman praising it for bringing Nebraska citizens closer to their government.



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Chief Executive Officer, NIC

Having undergone a complete redesign, Nebraska.gov was a finalist in the 2008 Best of the Web competition. The state focused hard on what users need and want from the portal. The result is increased accessibility to government services and a more intuitive user interface.

Users can now access more than 300 online services in just two clicks. A live chat service is available 24/7 for users with questions. The text on the site has been translated into 12 languages. A “Search By Task” feature allows users to find what they’re looking for even if they don’t know exactly what to call it.

By creating the site from the user’s perspective, Nebraska eliminated the need for citizens to know which agency or department they were seeking services from. “You don’t have to know how we’re organized to find what you’re looking for,” said Brenda Decker, CIO of Nebraska. “We put our most popular services for our citizens right on the front page.”



The front page has numerous links laid out on an attractive screen. These include business services, alerts, education info and a rotating “carousel” of new and unique services. Links are well organized and seemingly everywhere.

The portal allows users to easily change the size of the text, something that older users appreciate. And it appeals to younger users with its true mobile version, allowing citizens to see the site perfectly on mobile devices.

The self-funding model provided by NIC made a difference for the state. “Everyone is in such tight economic times,” said Decker. “I think this has been an effective means of lowering traditional state costs and yet deploying some much needed and very good services for citizens. It’s worked well in Nebraska.”

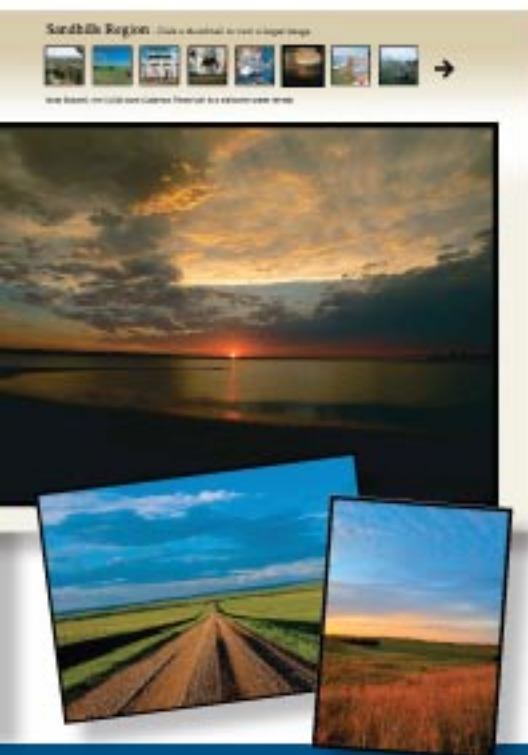
Functional Design, Big Difference

West Virginia is the latest state to partner with NIC, and the collaboration produced immediate results. The state’s new portal, **WV.gov**, debuted in May 2008, and the feedback from the public has been very positive. That’s because the portal gives access to huge amounts of information in a clear and simple presentation. WV.gov also features the

nation’s first education portal that provides students, parents, workers and teachers with a central resource for more than 900 education-based services.

Data is much easier for citizens to find. The portal’s design is functional, not organizational, allowing users to quickly drill down to the information they want. Prior to this, citizens needed to know which government agency provided a particular service if they wanted to find more information on it.

“Our citizens have better things to do than spend a lot of time navigating the state Web site in search of information that’s difficult to find,” said Kyle Schafer, CTO of West Virginia. “The new site is logical and straightforward, and we’re glad to link together resources from different levels of government to help citizens quickly find what they need.”





The new portal has a common look and feel across all state agencies. Prior to this, each agency created its own Web site, which resulted in dozens of different designs. The entire experience is now much more seamless for users.

The portal also includes a new enterprise-class content management system, which enables agencies to update information themselves, instead of relying on portal IT staff. And the state added a Google search feature specific to the state's information.

The new portal helps West Virginia respond to growing demand for electronic services and interaction. "Our citizenry is expecting it," said Schafer. "With our Gen X and Gen Y folks, they expect to do things online and not have to stand in line."

Creating the portal was a lot of work, but it went more quickly than expected, making the state optimistic about adding even more services soon. "We thought eGovernment was years away," said Schafer. "But with the speed at which NIC has been able to bring up sites, we can provide those eGovernment services here in the very near future."

New Era, New Portal

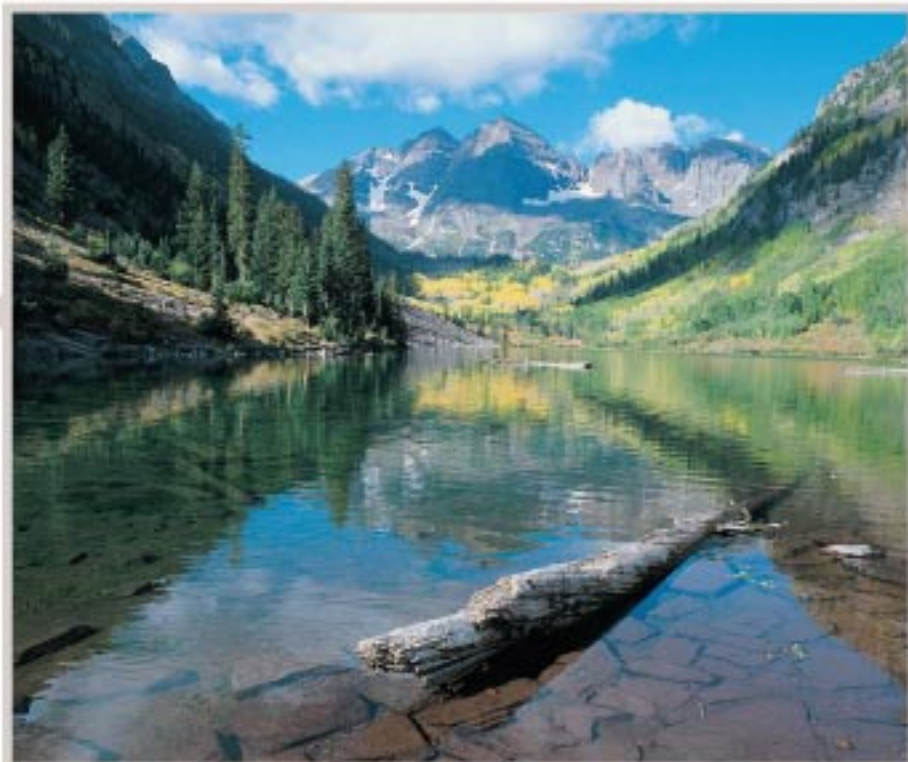
Colorado believes in the power of the portal. The state unveiled the new version of **Colorado.gov** in May 2008. It's a dynamic tool that helps users find a wealth of information on a wide variety of topics.

It's a new era for IT in Colorado, and eGovernment is a big part of that. Mike



Locatis was named CIO in January 2007. Legislation was passed in 2008 to consolidate the state's IT assets and give more authority to the CIO. Those changes are resulting in standardized systems, helping the state expand its online services. eGovernment is expected to be more effective under the new structure.

In 2008, the Colorado Web portal underwent a major redesign. When doing the overhaul, the state focused on the end-user experience. "Having services available 24/7 to make it more convenient for our citizens is imperative for us," said Locatis. "I think the portal also does a great job navigating to information about the state of Colorado."





So we're making it easier for citizens to transact business on the Web, and helping them to find critical information regarding Colorado state government."

The portal is now more appealing to the eye, and content is always evolving, encouraging citizens to return often. A Media Center offers links to cameras for weather, traffic and mountain conditions. In addition to Live Help online customer service, Colorado.gov offers AskColorado, which enables online chat with a state librarian. The portal also has photo galleries, and a section that highlights communities within the state.

Furthermore, lists of services are automatically sorted based on frequency of use, so the links used most often are always at the top of lists on the portal. "It's a smart site," said Locatis. "It collects a lot of information — not about the people who navigate it, but how they use the site — so that it can be shaped and be a self-improving resource." As a result of Colorado.gov's new portal design, the state was named a finalist in Best of the Web for the first time in 2008.

Power to the People

Rhode Island Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts wants citizens to have more information about what their government is doing. That's why the Web site for the Office of the Lt. Governor, ltgov.ri.gov, has Web 2.0 features that foster more interaction between the state and its residents.

Dan Meuse, deputy chief of staff for the office, said a priority for the lieutenant governor is easy communication in both directions. The Web makes that possible. "Using the resources of syndication that are



provided through a Web 2.0 platform is really valuable," said Meuse. The site uses RSS and other feeds to distribute information to constituents. The office is working with NIC on adding more feeds, including information on weather, news and health care.

Future plans include offering videos of government meetings. "So many decisions that government makes are made in public meetings," said Meuse. "Putting out that type of information — decision-makers in action, on video on the Internet for all the constituents to see — leads to better involvement in government, better knowledge about what's going on, and a more informed citizenry."

There are other plans as well. "One feature that will be added is blogging, so people can really get to know the lieutenant governor, be able to see what she's doing, see what her opinions are," said Meuse. "The news media can only cover so much, which is where technology can help deliver information." By pushing out information itself via blogs, the office can inform citizens about where the lieutenant governor stands on key issues.

Meuse predicts more elected officials will use social networking — both as a campaign tool and to engage citizens in government



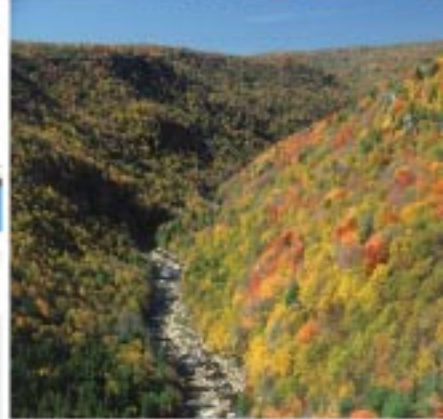
after election. "I think that's something elected officials will be looking forward to in the future and learning how to take advantage of now," he said.

Moving Forward

These next-generation portals fit in perfectly with several key themes running through government today: doing more with less, improving citizen services, promoting interaction and protecting the environment.

Perhaps the exciting part is that states are just getting started. Great strides have been made in the use of Web 2.0 and other online tools, but there is still much territory to explore. "Web 2.0 is in its infancy in government," said NIC's Herington. "And it's going to get stronger. I'm excited about what the future holds."

As the preceding case studies show, numerous states share that excitement, and they are deploying innovative and practical online features that respond to their communication goals and constituent needs.



To learn more about next-generation eGovernment portals, please contact Elizabeth Proudfit at 703-288-0980 or eproudfit@nicusa.com.

