

## **2008 Innovations Awards Program APPLICATION**

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-M-19MN

**Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:**

**State:** Minnesota

**Assign Program Category (applicant):** Health and Human Services: Aging

1. **Program Name:** Long-term Care Choices Navigator
2. **Administering Agency:** Minnesota Board on Aging
3. **Contact Person (Name and Title):** Krista Boston, Director, Consumer Choices Team
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7. **E-mail Address:** [Krista.boston@state.mn.us](mailto:Krista.boston@state.mn.us)
8. **Web site Address:** <http://longtermcarechoices.minnesotahelp.info/>
9. **Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.**

The Long-term Care Choices Navigator is an interactive, web-based tool that helps seniors and their families and caregivers determine what they need to live well and age well. It guides them to resources in their local community and creates a custom plan they can save, print, e-mail and refine over time.

**10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008 to be considered.**

The Long-term Care Choices Navigator has been online and available to the public since May 2006.

**11. Why was the program created?**

For several years Minnesota has undertaken an ambitious effort to reform and rebalance long-term care so that people can remain in their home and home-like settings rather than institutions if they wish. In 2003, a tri-partisan state task force recognized the need for a multi-faceted

approach involving phone, web and online chat services to help seniors and their families make decisions about long-term care. The need for interactive web tools was raised to the forefront of the agenda based on the increasing use of the internet by baby boomers, the fastest growing population. The Minnesota Legislature passed a mandate for the Minnesota Board on Aging to develop a web-based tool, which was implemented at [www.minnesotahelp.info](http://www.minnesotahelp.info).

**What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?**

(1) During focus groups, consumers identified the need for more than a “phone directory” of senior services. They indicated they needed to know what *kind* of services they *needed* before they could then find the services. They also wanted it to work like TurboTax® or similar tools that guide users through the site. The result was the Long-term Care Choices Navigator. The tool is designed to help people assess needs first and then guide them in selecting locally accessible services that can meet their specific needs.

(2) Because caregivers provide 95 percent of the care for older adults it is critical they feel comfortable in managing the care. The goal is to ultimately reduce the numbers of people who spend down their assets to qualify for Medicaid by encouraging seniors and their caregivers to access tools that allow them to manage their caregiving resources better. The incidence of long-distance caregiving is also increasing. People physically located several states away from the seniors for whom they are caring need help identifying needs and services to help meet those needs.

(3) With more and more caregivers working and more seniors using the internet to make decisions about or to find health care information, the site is preparing to meet the need of the age wave. People are tending to need egov access after hours. This site makes it easier for seniors and their caregivers to gather information about services for their loved ones whenever they have time. It provides reliable, easy-to-use resources that are available 24/7. It also allows creation of a plan of care that is managed by the family.

**12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.**

<b>Date Range</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Spring 2003	Initial concept developed and shared with prospective partners
Summer 2003	Applied for and received grant funding for project
Fall 2003 and Winter 2004	Performed research and gathered information
Spring 2004	Assembled work teams and consumer groups
Summer-Fall 2004 and Winter 2005	Gathered and developed content
Spring - Fall 2005	Programming of Navigator
Fall, 2005- Spring 2006	Beta testing, conducted focus group, data management and refinements to Navigator
May 2006	Launched Long-term Care Choices Navigator

**13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?**

To the best of our knowledge, the Long-term Care Choices Navigator is the only tool that can:

- Be customized by the user (by setting profile);
- Provide research-based recommendations for care developed by a panel of health care experts (Build Your Community Plan);

- Match needs to community-based service providers;
- Offer brief and/or lengthy information supports to better describe a service; and
- Save results in a secure environment so that the user can return to add/delete/edit results at any later time.

The Long-term Care Choices Navigator was designed to be highly interactive, accessible and usable. It has a high rating from tools like the World Wide Web Consortium .html Markup Validation Service and has been reviewed by experts and noted for exceeding minimum standards for accessibility.

The Long-term Care Choices Navigator provides eight assessments, including: Build Your Community Plan, which results in a set of geriatric researched-based recommendations; Daily Living Needs; Memory Loss; Health Insurance; Housing and Modifications; Safety and Security; Planning Ahead; and Caregiving. It also has a section providing in-depth information about housing options, a page to help people relocate from a nursing home and a guide called Next Steps for families who want to begin talking about long-term care needs.

People who use the Long-term Care Choices Navigator are asked to complete a profile on Step 1 so the tool can be highly personalized. Step 2 offers an assessment that gauges the client’s status related to activities of daily living, income and assets and caregiver supports. It then uses the responses to generate a chart that provides a research-based set of recommendations for long-term care. This part of the tool was created based on research conducted by the University of Minnesota Center on Aging with more than 100 geriatric professionals around the country. Steps 3-8 then guide the user through questions that help the user understand the aforementioned assessments that result in long-term care services based on zip code and then prompt the user to select the resources to match the needs.

People can answer some or all of the questions on Steps 3-8. A completed assessment will generate a set of local service providers and add the service to a plan that is forming behind the scenes. A “skip” button is available for people to bypass an area that isn’t relevant to their needs or that they might want to return to complete. When the person has completed the questions and selected services to meet their needs, the survey can be printed or saved. Information is stored on a secure server that can be accessed only with a valid login and password. The tool is scalable for the user so that a plan can be produced, saved and then modified over time based on the changes to a person’s condition. People who use the tool express how incredibly helpful it is in not only setting up a recommended plan of care but in helping caregivers know where to start, the questions to ask and the basics of the long-term care system.

**14. What were the program’s start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)+**

<b>Item(s)</b>	<b>Cost</b>
2 @ .25 FTE, Project Leadership	\$33,500
1.5 FTE, Project Coordination	105,000
*Development and image licenses	220,000
**In-kind participation	25,000
Accessibility Reviews	1,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$385,000</b>

\*Includes a content management tool used for editing of the existing tool and development of future tools at a greatly reduced cost.

\*\*Provided by the State of Ohio

**15. What are the program's annual operational costs?**

Annual operational costs for the program are about \$52,000 per year for hosting, customizations and maintenance. About \$12,000 is needed for maintenance of the interface, hosting, etc. The additional \$40,000 is used for maintenance of the service data that resides behind the tool in the Minnesotahelp.info web site.

**16. How is the program funded?**

The Aging & Disability Resource Center grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Administration on Aging and the Minnesota Board on Aging, as the lead project manager, provided development funding for the project. Annual maintenance costs are funded by the Minnesota Board on Aging (combination of state, grant and in-kind funds).

**17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.**

No. Although legislation was not required to implement it, the Minnesota Board on Aging did have a statutory mandate to implement a website providing long-term care information. The board chose this interactive style of tool for its implementation strategy.

**18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?**

The Long-term Care Choices Navigator is a web application written in ASP.NET applications. The n-tier application utilizes ASP.NET Web Forms, aspx.cs, .NET Framework Class Libraries in C#, .NET Framework DataSets and MS SQL Server 2005 Stored Procedures and Views.

The Navigator is hosted on secure servers using Microsoft 2003 Server and Microsoft SQL Server.

**19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.**

Yes. The Long-term Care Choices Navigator was a group effort between the Minnesota Board on Aging, which is the state unit on aging; Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health; the Minnesota Department of Human Services; and the Center on Aging at the University of Minnesota.

The names and contact information for the innovators are:

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**20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?**

No. There are some tools in development from national associations but none provide the customized user experience, nor do they match the simplicity of user interface and aggressive accessibility standards of Minnesota's tool.

**21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?**

Implementation of Phase 1 has been completed. There will be ongoing enhancements made to the Long-term Care Choices Navigator. Questions and resources related to the military veterans status of seniors and their family members will be added during 2008. In addition, the Board on Aging's Senior LinkAge Line®, the telephone service coupled with the Long-term Care Navigator, will launch secure online chat in 2008 through the navigator. This will allow users to consult with a long-term care options counselor on the phone when questions arise during completion of the assessments.

Another new component in development is the ability for the user to forward his/her results (Plan) to their county human/social service office for a face-to-face visit with a long-term care consultant for those who are more frail or at risk of nursing home placement. The Minnesota Board on Aging and the pilot county are working through the security issues needed to safely transmit the data from one entity to another.

**22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.**

**PROS**

Since May of 2006, the Long-term Care Choices Navigator has been available for use by consumers. Web statistics have been maintained on the Navigator since August of 2006 through the present. During that time, more than 7,200 unique visitors have used the Navigator. An average of 114 visitor sessions are recorded each day.

Preliminary results indicate that users find the tool easy and friendly to use, that there were more services in their community than they expected, that they like being able to save their information and come back to the tool at a later date, and that the tool is comprehensive. One example of consumer satisfaction is from a user who we'll call Joe. After using the Navigator, he said "It's really a maze going through all of this but this service is a good guide for those of us in the

process of downsizing.” Most importantly, Joe said, “The service helped me decide whether to stay living at home or not.” Joe found help with his lawn care, housekeeping and resources he can use in the future to help him continue his independent lifestyle.

One important characteristic of the Long-term Care Choices Navigator is its emphasis on accessibility for people with disabilities. A nationally recognized expert in Web accessibility had this to say after a review of the site: “An AMAZING job here ... They’ve done a great job with a tight development and QA process. Of course, this is what we should expect when requesting an accessible site, but it is still too infrequent that we see this level of attention paid to the details.”

### **CONS**

Some users are overwhelmed by the long-term care system and didn’t necessarily realize the amount of time it takes to learn the system. While the web is a useful starting point, many will need to talk to someone face to face at some point in the process but these services are not fully funded or available. The state of Minnesota continues to explore ways to provide face-to-face assistance through newly developing programs, such as caregiver coaching, so that once a community plan is developed, the user has someone to turn to on an ongoing basis.

The database itself requires intensive maintenance. Also, it has been identified that there is a need to add service availability information (the number one request of consumers) and to allow consumers to purchase services directly through the Navigator.

### **23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?**

The Long-term Care Choices Navigator contains supporting materials, such as web links, tip sheets and other documents, that were not originally part of the plan. The supporting materials help a user understand the options and services that are available to seniors who want to remain in the community. Also, a section devoted to helping users understand the variety of housing options available for living in the community has been added to the tool. In addition, a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs helped to reveal the need for more intensive triage in the tool for those who are veterans or spouses or children of military veterans.

The Long-term Care Choices Navigator has served as a model for an additional Navigator, named the Youth Resource Navigator. This tool, developed in association with the Children and Family Services area of the Minnesota Department of Human Services, is available through [www.minnesotahelp.info](http://www.minnesotahelp.info). In addition, a Resource Navigator for people with disabilities is currently in the planning stages.

### **24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?**

Some challenges that have been encountered along the way include: (1) Project coordination between subject matter experts and programmers can be challenging. Strong project management on the part of the state is very important. (2) Finding the necessary technical expertise to develop the architecture, algorithm and accessibility reviews. (3) The development, organization (using a taxonomy), and maintenance of a statewide community resource database from which to pull resources is expensive and time-consuming. (4) Obtaining adequate funds to cover changes in design/functionality that occur after meeting with consumers and/or alpha and beta testers.