

## **2008 Innovations Awards Program APPLICATION**

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-S-08FL

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

State: Florida

Assign Program Category (applicant): Health and Human Resources, Children & Families (Use list at end of application)

1. Program Name  
Automated Community Connection to Economic Self-Sufficiency (ACCESS) Online Application
2. Administering Agency  
Department of Children & Families
3. Contact Person (Name and Title)  
Jennifer Lange, Director
4. Address 1317 Winewood Blvd. Tallahassee, Fl., 32399
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7. E-mail Address  
Jennifer\_Lange@dcf.state.fl.us
8. Web site Address <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>
9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.  
The ACCESS Florida Online Application is the basis of a modernized public assistance service delivery system. The Online Application provides customers with a 24\*7 internet-based process to apply for Food Stamp benefits, Temporary Cash Assistance and Medicaid.
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 Online Application was implemented in April 2005.
11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?  
Customers were required in most instances to visit offices to complete the paperwork necessary in order to apply for needed benefits. This created a hardship. In some instances, multiple trips were required, not just by the customer applying for benefits but the individual(s) assisting in the application process (e.g., a relative familiar with the customer's living situation). Waits in offices were sometimes long because of the large number of people applying for benefits. Distances from offices and costs of transportation were increasing. Office hours did not always match the customers' schedules (e.g., customers need to take off work to visit the office to complete an application).
12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.  
Phase 1 of the Online Application was implemented May 2004.  
The e-Signature ability was implemented April 2005.  
The Online Application was converted from Cache to Java in January 2006.

Additional ADA requirements were implemented in August 2006.

The Online Application was redesigned to make it easier for customers to understand and complete and implemented in March 2008.

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

The Online Application uses widely accessible technology, saves time and costs for customers, and allows for a reduced work force.

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.)

The web application was created in-house by existing state and contract staff.

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

The web application is not a stand alone program, but rather a tool used in the administration of Florida's public assistance programs. These programs have an administrative budget of \$204 million annually for Comprehensive Eligibility Services, which includes salaries and benefits for 4,109 staff.

16. How is the program funded?

The Online Application is funded via the normal Federal Financial Participation and State dollars.

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

No.

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

Java language, Oracle database, WebLogic servers, Mainstream internet browsers.

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.

Florida was the first state to implement a multi-program online application. The extent to which the Online Application is used is unique to the State of Florida.

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

Other states have implemented online applications, usually after discussion with staff from the State of Florida.

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

Yes.

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

Based on the results of customer surveys, it is apparent that the Online Application has been readily embraced by customers. Customers no longer make multiple trips to an office. Given rising gas prices, in particular, this is a significant cost-savings. Time need not be taken off work thus earnings are not lost.

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

The Online Application is so widely accepted by customers that over 96% utilize this method to apply for benefits.

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

Customers may be resistant, or fearful of, completing an application using the internet and not seeing a "real person." This can be overcome by providing partner sites to help and providing help using the Online Application in offices so that customers can then complete the application on their own in the future.