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2010 Innovations Awards Application

Deadline: March 1, 2010

ID # (assigned by CSG): **10-E-05ME**

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Maine

Assign Program Category (applicant): Government Operations and Technology (Use list at end of application)

1. Program Name: Maine.gov Media Gallery
2. Administering Agency: InforME
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9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The Maine.gov Media Gallery is the one-stop location within the Maine.gov portal where state government audio and video files are stored and made viewable to the public. This central location of media content provides convenience for the public, promotes the state's multimedia efforts, attracts visitors, and is the first state media solution that is fully accessible to the disabled according to federal guidelines and industry best practices.

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, 2010 to be considered.

The service launched in April 2009.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

Prior to the creation of the Maine.gov Media Gallery, a variety of methods were used by agencies to make multimedia content available to the public, including YouTube, Google, and other third party sites, and posting multimedia content directly within their respective sites on Maine.gov. As a result, state government multimedia content offered to the public was scattered across a variety of sites, not easy to find, had inconsistent branding for the State of Maine, and typically was not accessible.

The Maine.gov Media Gallery provides an easy way for citizens to find state multimedia content, and all video and audio content in the Gallery is accessible to individuals with disabilities through the use of closed-captioning and transcription.

Previously, state agencies had difficulty complying with accessibility requirements for online media content and this presented a roadblock for making media content available online. Most agencies do not have the expertise or staff time to develop captioned files and transcripts on their own, and hiring third parties to do this was expensive and cumbersome. Now, they simply publish audio or video files to the Media Gallery system using the agency web interface, and the captioning/transcription is taken care of automatically within minutes or a couple of days at most. The agency is notified when the accessible file is ready and the agency administrator can publish the file to the public Gallery and obtain code for embedding the content on their agency site as well. When accessibility is made easy, agencies are more than willing to comply with policy and publish accessible content.

The significance of making state multimedia fully accessible cannot be overstated. This is an enormous leap forward for state government and will benefit the public, both disabled and non-disabled. Maine has been a leader in government accessibility for many years, and continues to present a model for other states to follow.

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

Design and architecture of the service began in May of 2008. During this time, a user-friendly design and architecture were carefully implemented. In addition, the system plan was presented to state agency partners and changes were made based on their feedback.

Development started in the beginning of November 2008 and went through mid-April of 2009. This allowed for a thorough testing phase involving the participation of several state pilot agencies. Integration with Automated Sync Technologies, a third-party captioning and transcription provider, was also completed at this time.

The final step was a security vulnerability audit, which took place after development was completed. InforME takes numerous measures to ensure the highest level of security and privacy in all Maine.gov applications. The online service was subjected to both automated and manual security reviews to ensure that the application did not contain any known security risks.

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

The Maine.gov Media Gallery is the first and only fully accessible state government media solution in the nation. It not only provides an easy way for the public to find state multimedia content, it also ensures that video and audio are accessible to individuals with disabilities through closed-captioning and audio transcription.

The public Media Gallery website is user-friendly and allows citizens to search media files by keywords and media type (audio or video). The Media Gallery highlights the most popular, recently added, and featured content. Users can also select a channel for a given participating state agency and browse that agency's featured, recent, and most popular content.

While some states are using YouTube to publish media content, the state of Maine decided to develop its own solution for several reasons: 1) YouTube does not enforce or facilitate accessibility requirements; 2) concerns about advertising and association with inappropriate content; 3) concerns about licensing and ownership of content; and 4) dilution of the Maine.gov brand and potential confusion for the public about what is "official" state media content and what is not.

The Maine.gov Media Gallery is a custom developed web application that leverages a variety of technologies to make it easy for Maine agencies to meet state standards when publishing media content. In addition to a stringent accessibility policy, the state of Maine has developed standards for media formats to enable a

consistent approach to multimedia across agencies. The Media Gallery allows agencies to upload nearly any video file format and the system will automatically encode the file to the state standard format, FLV. (Flash video)

In addition to encoding services, the Maine.gov Media Gallery offers automated transcription and captioning services. Most agencies do not have the resources or expertise to produce transcripts or captions and in the past it has been difficult for them to comply with the state's accessibility policy for multimedia. Through the Media Gallery, agencies no longer have to worry about producing the transcripts and captions themselves. They simply upload the video or audio file, and the rest is taken care of in a quick and automated manner.

The Maine.gov Media Gallery leverages a third-party transcription and captioning provider (Automated Sync Technologies). If an agency uploads a media file without associated caption or transcription files, the media content is automatically sent to AST using Web Services, where the necessary files are generated and returned to Maine.gov. Upon receiving the completed files, a notification is sent to the agency, indicating that their file is ready to be published with full accessibility. This entire process is automated and requires no action on the part of the agency.

In addition to these tools, the Maine.gov Media Gallery provides agencies with a powerful administrative site to manage their multimedia content. Each department has an account with a designated administrator who can manage agency users, remove or publish media files, and review usage and statistical reports for published files. Users can obtain HTML code that allows them to embed a media file on their agency website or create a link to their agency media channel.

The next phase for the Media Gallery will be the addition of a live streaming channel in 2010, allowing agencies to broadcast live audio or video of meetings and events through Maine.gov. The live channel will be fully accessible with live captioning.

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 Maine.gov Media Gallery required approximately six months of dedicated development. Development started in the beginning of November 2008 and went through mid-April of 2009. This allowed for a thorough testing phase involving the participation of several state agency partners. A security audit also took place during this time.

The Maine.gov Media Gallery was developed by InforME, the state's self-funded e-government portal, at no cost to the state or taxpayers. The approximate value of the development of the service is \$55,000.

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

Ongoing maintenance and operation of the Maine.gov Media Gallery are provided by InforME at no cost to the state or taxpayers, at a value of approximately \$10,000 annually.

16. How is the program funded?

The Maine.gov Media Gallery was developed by InforME, the state's e-government portal, at no cost to the state or taxpayers. Ongoing maintenance and operation of the Maine.gov Media Gallery are also provided by InforME. Participation in the Maine.gov Media Gallery is free to agencies and is provided through an InforME service level agreement. There are fees charged to participating agencies for high bandwidth usage (above a free baseline level), as well as captioning, transcription and encoding services.

InforME was created by Maine state legislation to be the e-government portal for the State of Maine under a self-funded, no appropriations model.

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

No. This program did require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations.

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

The Maine.gov Media Gallery was developed in Perl and utilizes a MySQL 5.0 database. The media gallery utilizes the ffmpeg command line tool to encode audio and video files to meet state media format standards.

All files for the Media Gallery are hosted on a media server managed by the Maine.gov portal. The media server is separate from the rest of the Maine.gov hosting environment to protect the rest of Maine.gov content from reduced bandwidth or server connections that could be caused by media viewing.

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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 Maine.gov Media Gallery is a custom developed web application developed by InforME. The application leverages a variety of technologies to make it easy for Maine agencies to meet state standards when publishing media content.

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

A few centralized media features exist in other states. However, to our knowledge no other state provides a fully accessible solution or a custom developed solution offering agencies media publishing and management tools like the Maine.gov Media Gallery.

While some states are using YouTube to publish media content, the state of Maine decided to develop its own solution for several reasons: 1) YouTube does not enforce or facilitate accessibility requirements; 2) concerns about advertising and association with inappropriate content; 3) concerns about licensing and ownership of content; and 4) dilution of the Maine.gov brand and potential confusion for the public about what is "official" state media content and what is not.

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

The Media Gallery application has been fully developed. However, plans are currently underway to enhance the Media Gallery to include more than pre-recorded media, and further efforts are planned for marketing and expansion of the service.

Within the next year, the Maine.gov Media Gallery will be expanded to offer a live streaming media solution. As with pre-recorded media, all live streaming content will be captioned to ensure that it is fully accessible to the disabled. In addition, the Maine.gov Media Gallery will be further enhanced with public interface updates such as tag based searching and tag based sorting, as well as some enhancements to the agency administrative functions.

InforME is working closely with the CIO's Office to inform agencies about the service and to encourage use of the Maine.gov service as opposed to third-party media publishing options (YouTube, etc.). The CIO and the InforME Board have approved a plan to move legacy video and audio files on Maine.gov servers over to the new media server and to disallow any further publishing of media files on Maine.gov except through the Media Gallery service.

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

The Maine.gov Media Gallery is open to participation by all agencies within the State of Maine. The service launched in April 2009. Currently, ten agencies are participating and many more have expressed interest in providing content in the coming weeks and months. We expect participation to continue to grow as agencies become aware of the Gallery and its ease of use.

The Media Gallery is providing a more user-friendly experience for citizens, allowing them to find and consume official state media content easily. The service is fully accessible to individuals with disabilities, unlike most multimedia services. Since the Media Gallery launched in April 2009, there have been over 26,500 total viewings of the media files offered. This is expected to grow tremendously as awareness and the number of media files available increases.

The Maine.gov Media Gallery offers agencies a quick, easy way in which they can make fully accessible multimedia content available to the public. Since media content can now be featured both on Maine.gov centrally and on the agency's website, the agency gains visibility and promotion of its content. The transcription and captioning services provided by the Maine.gov Media Gallery offer agencies a low cost, efficient service to ensure that their content is fully accessible. Through the simple administrative tools, an agency can publish a fully accessible media file to the gallery within a matter of minutes.

Feedback from participating agencies has been extremely positive. They have found the system easy to use and preferable to other available media publishing options, and very cost effective.

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

The Maine.gov Media Gallery will continue to grow. The system first launched in April 2009 with 3 pilot agencies participating and contributing content. A year later, ten agencies are actively participating and many more have expressed interest in providing content in the coming weeks and months.

In the first few months after the Media Gallery launched, there were over 3,500 total viewings of the media files offered. A year later, that number has grown to over 26,500 views. This is expected to grow tremendously as awareness of the site and the number of media files available increases.

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

Although the Maine.gov Media Gallery offers many benefits for state agencies, some agencies still use outside sources for video content (YouTube, Google, etc), either unaware of the Media Gallery service or based solely on the cost (free vs fee).

The State's CIO is championing the Media Gallery and is considering making the Media Gallery the only acceptable publishing mechanism for state media content. However, there currently is not an effective method to police agencies that are using these other methods of posting content to outside sources.

This is the only hindrance we can foresee regarding the adoption and use of the service. Most agencies have found the Media Gallery fees to be very reasonable.

CSG reserves the right to use or publish in other CSG products the information provided in this application. If your agency objects to this policy, please advise us in a separate attachment.



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2010 Innovations Awards Application Program Categories and Subcategories

Use these as guidelines to determine the appropriate Program Category for your state's submission and list that program category on page one of this application. Choose only one.

Infrastructure and Economic Development

- Business/Commerce
- Economic Development
- Transportation

Government Operations and Technology

- Administration
- Elections
- Information Systems
- Public Information
- Revenue
- Telecommunications

Health & Human Services

- Aging
- Children & Families
- Health Services
- Housing
- Human Services

Human Resources/Education

- Education
- Labor
- Management
- Personnel
- Training and Development
- Workforce Development

Natural Resources

- Agriculture
- Energy
- Environment
- Environmental Protection
- Natural Resources
- Parks & Recreation
- Water Resources

Public Safety/Corrections

- Corrections
- Courts
- Criminal Justice
- Drugs
- Emergency Management
- Public Safety

Save in .doc or rtf. Return completed application electronically to innovations@csg.org or mail to:

CSG Innovations Awards 2010
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This application is also available at www.csg.org.