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2010 Innovations Awards Application

ID # (assigned by CSG): **10-E-12NY**

State: New York State

Program Category: Government Operations & Technology

Program Name: Empire 2.0 Create, Connect, Collaborate

Administering Agency: NYS Chief Information Office/Office for Technology
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Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The [Empire 2.0](#) strategy is a roadmap for New York Executive Branch agencies to use Web 2.0, new media, and social collaborative tools and technologies to increase efficiency, improve intergovernmental communications and encourage citizen involvement. It is modeled after and in support of President Obama's [strategy on Open Government](#).

How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

The Empire 2.0 Project was publicly launched on June 5, 2009.

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

Empire 2.0 is a statewide theme for New York in the use of social networking services. Modeled after and in support of President Obama's [strategy on Open Government](#), the Empire 2.0 strategy is a roadmap for New York Executive Branch agencies to use Web 2.0, new media and social collaborative tools and technologies to improve intergovernmental communications and encourage citizen involvement by initiating conversations to strengthen our communities and government. The Empire 2.0 strategy encourages New York State agencies to embrace these engaging technologies to interact with each other and with citizens, businesses, and employees with increased efficiency, collaboration, transparency, and openness. There are four goals that drive the vision behind Empire 2.0:

- 1) Promote open and transparent government for policy and decision-making.
- 2) Increase collaboration and participation by engaging New York State constituents through the use of innovative tools and new media technologies.
- 3) Increase the awareness of government initiatives to the “Generation V” (virtual) community.
- 3) Increase efficiency of government operations.

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

New York State agencies have immersed themselves in a variety of Web 2.0 technologies in an effort to strengthen our communities and government. On June 5, 2009, the New York State Chief Information Office/Office for Technology (CIO/OFT) launched the Empire 2.0 initiative in conjunction with the State’s first ever Capitol Camp. This inaugural “unconference”, co-sponsored by the State Senate and CIO/OFT, convened a diverse group of over 100 people from government, business, non-profits and citizens to discuss using new Web 2.0 communication technologies to improve government transparency and participation of citizens in government.

Since this unveiling, CIO/OFT created a statewide inter-agency workgroup, which continues to drive multiple strategies to implement Empire 2.0. The mission of Empire 2.0 is to promote the increasing use of technology, social networking and the sharing of information to increase transparency, efficiency and government participation for all citizens of New York. Transparency should create more open state and local governments. Efficiency should enable the State of New York’s agencies to serve citizens in an effective and expedient manner. Participation should help New Yorkers take a more active role in their State government.

The Empire 2.0 Workgroup is engaged in a multi-pronged approach involving education and training, solution piloting, the development of a governance framework and knowledge sharing – with the goal of encouraging and guiding NYS agencies in the effective and efficient use of Web 2.0 technologies. This multi-pronged approach involves several components:

Best Practice Guidance: The Empire 2.0 Workgroup will develop and publish a New York State Center of Best Practices site, which will provide state agencies with guidelines, policies and best practices for understanding the various Web 2.0 technologies, their applications, their benefits and best uses. In addition, the Center will provide policy guidance in uncharted areas such as the application of the Freedom of Information Law to content posted using Web 2.0 technologies; how to deal with increased security and privacy concerns; and the applicability of accessibility rules when posting content on third party Web 2.0 sites.

Recently, CIO/OFT published [Business Uses of Social Networking](#) which provides appropriate use and guidelines for New York State government agencies.

Education: CIO/OFT provides training in social media technologies, including technical staff training to provide employees with the skills to begin the gradual adoption of the use of Web 2.0 technologies in state government.

Knowledge Sharing: CIO/OFT has co-sponsored an “unconference”, published a Digital NY Survey to track current usage of Web 2.0 technologies and launched the Empire 2.0 Website to facilitate enthusiasm and knowledge building, which is critical to create the paradigm shift in how we do our work and engage with citizens.

Application Pilots: The Empire 2.0 Workgroup serves as an incubator and pilot group for new tools and technologies identified for possible use. Currently the workgroup is engaged in the following projects:

- **Peer to Policy Project:** This application is a partnership with NY Law School and Pace University to develop a collaborative tool for policy development. The Peer to Policy system will provide a dedicated site for policymakers and citizens to develop statewide IT policies. The site will allow posting and discussion of proposed policies, editing and annotation, a document library and rating.
- **iPhone:** The iPhone Project is a partnership with the State University of New York at Albany to build an iPhone application that, at a minimum, will contain applications such as career center locations, an unemployment insurance calculator, traffic alerts, winning lottery numbers and tax zip code lookup.
- **Mashup:** The Empire 2.0 Workgroup is exploring and experimenting with a variety of data mashups that can be useful for business and/or can benefit citizens. The current focus is on broadband grant reporting. This mashup will display how funds are allocated to applicants by county and congressional districts.
- **Data Repository:** NYS is establishing a NYS Data Repository - a one-stop site that will contain a variety of state owned data sets for public consumption and manipulation. The project is also partnering with the Polytechnic Institute of NYU to sponsor a “innovative applications” contest whereby students create innovative applications using the data sets in the Repository.

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

There are three reasons why Empire 2.0 is new and creative:

- 1) Citizens benefit from increased transparency of government and an opportunity to provide input to government policymakers. Today, citizens are demanding a more active role in government. Web 2.0 technologies provide policymakers with the means to meet that demand.
- 2) Employees benefit by quicker knowledge transfer, greater engagement in projects and, particularly for Generation V (virtual) employees, the chance to work with new and emerging technologies.
- 3) Immediate benefits for policymakers are increased participation, or usage of, these tools. Long term benefits should be reductions in cost, improvements in productivity and improvements in attracting and retaining talent. Most importantly, Web 2.0 tools allow policymakers to tap into the creativity and energy of their workers and their citizens.

What were the program's start-up costs?

There are no costs associated with this initiative. The administering agency and partner agencies devote staff and have redirected existing resources for support of Empire 2.0.

What are the program's annual operational costs?

There are no costs.

How is the program funded?

Empire 2.0 relies on staff participation from various government partners and uses open source and freely available software.

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

No.

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

Brainstorming portal – The following site <http://techtalk.cio.ny.gov> allows users to engage in brainstorming and online discussions regarding technology strategies for New York. The site is dedicated to overarching technology strategies. This site allows participants to submit ideas, discuss and refine others' ideas and vote the best ones to the top.

Wiki – CIO/OFT has launched a Wiki, <http://wiki.cio.ny.gov> that can be used by stakeholders, employees or project teams. Participants simply go to the site, create a page and invite the audience to participate. CIO/OFT will initially be using the wiki for collaborative statewide IT policy development, but it will be expanded to greater use moving forward.

Twitter – Citizens and employees can now follow CIO/OFT on Twitter @NYStateCIO for near real-time updates on what CIO/OFT is involved in. Participants can take part in the dialog by tweeting. All employees now have access to twitter for business purposes.

The Department of Labor also has a presence on Twitter @NYSLabor for updates on unemployment benefits and extensions, free training programs and information about job fairs and recruitments across New York State.

Facebook – CIO/OFT created a Facebook presence at <http://www.facebook.com/nystatecio>. All employees now have access to Facebook for business purposes.

Nearly 3,000 people are fans of the Department of Labor's (DOL) Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/nyslabor>. Since launch in August 2009, the page has become a place for the unemployed to get their benefits questions answered and find out the latest information on extensions in unemployment insurance. DOL has committed to helping the more than 850,000 unemployed people get back to work and is answering their Facebook questions nights and weekends.

YouTube Channel – CIO/OFT launched a YouTube channel, at <http://www.youtube.com/user/NYStateCIO>, to post video clips from various events. Soon, employees will be invited to create short video clips about their job, a clip about a day in the life at CIO/OFT from an employee's perspective, or a clip of something of general interest at CIO/OFT. Our goal is for employees to share stories of achievements and hard work so the external community can see the talents and hard work employees at CIO/OFT put forth each day.

Blog – Citizens and employees can now find more news on the Department of Labor's Buzz Blog <http://laborbuzz.labor.ny.gov>. There DOL posts follow-up information about labor investigations, articles related to jobs and unemployment and events attended by employees at DOL. Soon businesses and

jobseekers that have worked with the Labor Department will be guest contributors to the blog, giving some insight on the programs offered for businesses and the unemployed.

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.

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

No.

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

Yes.

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

While we expect all of our Web 2.0 initiatives to enhance our business process and open up a dialogue with the community, the Policy Wiki is currently the best example of how government operations have improved. Prior to launching the Wiki, policy development was slow, painstaking and tedious. Policies were driven by the ideas and, perhaps biases, of government analysts. Policy ideas, and sometimes policy content, were often vetted at the end of the policy development process. This process did not benefit from the synergy created by back and forth discussion and sharing of ideas. Several improvements to the IT policy making process are expected for the Policy Wiki:

1) Improved Quality of Government Operations:

Better end-product. The open and transparent approach of using a wiki promises to improve the quality of our IT policy making process by avoiding pitfalls down the line such as stakeholder opposition, lack of buy-in and ineffective and unenforceable policies. The inclusive nature of this approach promises to surface high quality and relevant IT policies.

2) Increased Workforce Productivity:

Reduce work and staff. There is an expectation of improved workforce productivity as this collaborative process eliminates time consuming work groups, printing and mailing of documents and time spent incorporating many diverse comments from multiple stakeholders.

3) Increased Operational Efficiency:

Shorten timeframes. Policy development can easily take six months to a year from idea development to a final published document. The use of a wiki cuts this process down to weeks. Through collaboration, participants generate ideas, provide arguments for and against, develop content, make revisions and facilitate approvals.

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

The Empire 2.0 initiative started as a vision, but has matured to have sponsorship, leadership and participation. The workgroup was initially made up of CIO/OFT employees and has grown to include representatives from several other government entities and private universities. The group now has a clear mission statement and several work groups that are busy working on the tangible projects noted earlier.

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

The most likely obstacles to developing a similar program are:

- Legal concerns with using social networking sites, such as privacy and accessibility
- Security risks
- Cultural and organizational resistance to change

To assist in overcoming these obstacles, the Empire 2.0 Workgroup will develop and publish a New York State Center of Best Practices site which will provide state agencies with guidelines, policies and best practices for understanding the various Web 2.0 technologies, their applications, their benefits and best uses. In addition, the Center will provide policy guidance in uncharted areas such as the application of the Freedom of Information Law to content posted using Web 2.0 technologies; how to deal with increased security and privacy concerns; and the applicability of accessibility rules when posting content on third party Web 2.0 sites.