



The Council of State Governments
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2011 Innovations Awards Application

DEADLINE: MARCH 28, 2011

ID # (assigned by CSG): 2011- _____

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Illinois

Assign Program Category (applicant): Government Operations and Technology

1. *Program Name:* DCEO Grant Tracker
2. *Administering Agency:* Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO)
3. *Contact Person:* Lisa Stott, Deputy Director, Office of Marketing & Communications
4. *Address:* 500 E Monroe, Springfield, IL 62701
5. *Phone:* 217-785-6160
6. *Fax:* 217-524-0864
7. *Email:* Lisa.Stott@illinois.gov
8. *Web site:* <http://granttracker.ildceo.net/>

9. *Brief Description:* Citizens can search the thousands of grants that are administered by DCEO each year to find who received grants, where the money was spent, and for what purpose. Citizens can search by funding categories or source, regions and by organization name, and can review their results visually by list, map or spreadsheet download.

10. *How long operational?* DCEO Grant Tracker was launched on March 15, 2010.

11. *Why was program created?* DCEO Grant Tracker was created to provide a higher level of transparency to the citizens of Illinois regarding where their taxpayer dollars are spent.

12. *Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.* Once the Director decided he wanted to launch an aggressive transparency initiative in time for the 2010 Sunshine Week, it took approximately two months for DCEO staff to design, build, and test DCEO Grant Tracker, and retrain agency staff for some of their internal data keeping to become public:

- Design Site / Define Content including review of typical FOIAs and redacted information
- Define Data Parameters including start date/ what grants/ any exclusions and why excluded
- Determine Intuitive Search Structure based on citizen not bureau-centric and Define Search Categories
- Examine and clarify all grant program Nomenclature
- Data Review of new public-facing information
- Run queries
- Load testing
- Add Drill Down and Mapping Functionality so viewer can see exact location of where the money was spent
- Soft Launch to agency for further testing

- Public Launch

13. *Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?* DCEO administers thousands of grants annually, including legislative earmarks. We believe we are the most comprehensive, easy-to-use web site in the nation when it comes to grant-making transparency. We haven't found another state web site that provides the detailed examination of grant-making that we do.

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.)* DCEO Grant Tracker was built using approximately 15 in-house technology and program staff, including database administrator, programmers, webmaster, and graphic designer.

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

16. *How is the program funded?* This was an in-house staff project with no outside funding sources.

17. This innovation did not require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations.

18. *What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?* DCEO Grant Tracker is a Microsoft Server-based web application that has been made available to the Internet. It utilizes Windows Server and SQL Server to host the application and data. DCEO Grant Tracker was written using Microsoft VB.Net coding framework for the web application and incorporates Adobe Flash add-ins. The grant data represented in DCEO Grant Tracker is extracted from our internal grant processing system "eGrants" and refreshed daily by an automatic scheduled process. DCEO Grant Tracker also features an integrated Grant Mapping interface that was developed using a configurable Adobe Flash Plug-In created by ERSI. That Plug-In was configured by DCEO and integrated into the DCEO Grant Tracker site. The Contact Us feature uses a SharePoint database to create a workflow for responses.

19. *To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state?* This project was inspired by many ARRA reporting sites around the nation, but was geared toward a broader accounting/explanation of all grants distributed by DCEO, regardless of source, and was built entirely by in-house staff. Special attention was given to the language used on the site, to make it clear and understandable and not written in "government-ese." We have not found a state grant-making web site that comes close to DCEO Grant Tracker.

20. *Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?* The idea for the DCEO Grant Tracker was based on ARRA reporting sites both federally and within several states, including Illinois. DCEO's program differs because it provides data on all grants administered by the agency, regardless of funding source, plus goes much further than mapping out the dollars spent with the level of detail regarding each grant.

21. *Has the program been fully implemented?* The first phase of Grant Tracker was fully implemented, but we have several additional services planned for Phase II, including posting redacted grant applications, adding legislators' names to the drop-down box (currently district number), adding search by Local Workforce Investment Area, and adding photos of the grant locations so citizens can see progress (if applicable).

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

A citizen wrote this shortly after launch on March 24, 2010: "Thanks for pointing me to the DCEO Grant Tracker website. I found it was attractive, well organized, easy to use, and informative. In my field, we are primarily interested in the community grants for human services, such as Emergency Shelter and Community Development Block Grants -- so it was nice to see grants tracked by how much is awarded, for what purpose, and where the recipient is located. In most cases, we can also see how much has been spent thus far (as opposed to how much was awarded.) Information is easy to sort, and I love the integrated map features that can either give you a satellite

image of where the specific recipient is located, or an overview of grants disbursed throughout a region or the state as a whole."

In addition to citizen satisfaction, the site has helped our Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Officer cut down on number of requests, by pointing citizens to the site for the information they previously had to find through FOIA.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception? We must add new tabs for additional fiscal years (as we had to do for FY11) and we regularly update the statistics and Success Stories. Otherwise, the framework of the project has remained unchanged to date.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program? DCEO staff was able to build this program within two months because an internal grants tracking system had already been built several years earlier, called eGrants. Regardless, the biggest barrier was insuring fields in the internal system were ready for public consumption. For example, internally some programs had the same names and were simply differentiated by a 1, 2, 3: this wouldn't have made sense to a citizen. We had to work with program staff and programmers to make sure fields in eGrants were comprehensive and understandable to the public, which included retraining agency staff for transparency. We had to clean up addresses, add a backend field for zip+4, and find "local" addresses when grants went to out-of-state entities for in-state projects.

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2011 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
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- Public Safety

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This application is also available at www.csg.org.