



# Iowa 100% E News

The latest on the State's 100% E Web migration

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## The Value of Technology in Government

**As the State of Iowa continues its quest toward electronic service integration, the value of this multi-faceted endeavor is evident in many ways.**

In this issue, we'll expand on two elements: 1) simplifying the lives of Iowa citizens and State employees and 2) resource savings and efficiencies

### Simplifying Lives

Simplifying the manner in which services are delivered benefit the citizens of Iowa and state government. Here are illustrations of how the use of electronic tools enhances productivity and efficiency.

### Web initiatives

Citizens gain instant access to state government through links to individual agencies and state resources. Samples of links currently available include:

- Housing and Financial assistance - informs those looking for housing about low-interest loans or other financial aid opportunities
- Health Care Facilities report card - grants quick access to Iowa nursing home and care facility report cards
- Sex offender registry - allows citizens to find information about the location of convicted sex offenders
- Electronic library - puts news from a number of sources at citizens' fingertips
- Iowa Resource Network - helps citizens locate where to receive childcare, health care, recreation, education and social services
- Historical Society Store - a place to purchase "Iowa" merchandise and publications on-line and renew historical society memberships

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## The Value of Technology - continued

- Targeted small business - promotes Iowa-based companies by listing locations of businesses who offer their products

The results of such Internet initiatives are promising. In July 2001, 729,251 people visited the state website. By accessing the government electronically, Iowans maximized convenience by avoiding lines and saving on parking and fuel costs. Even more encouraging is the estimate that **each citizen** saved a minimum of \$4 per transaction and **State government** saved employee costs and time equaling \$4 per transaction - a savings of more than \$5 million during that month alone!

Cost savings are always welcome but it also helps to hear feedback from real people. Here are a few comments received about the state website:



- “Just wanted to say how much I appreciate the depth and quality of this site. How can we get the word out about this? It will save folks a lot of phone calls and gives straightforward access to much good stuff. Very well done! Taxpayer money well spent.”
- “I have browsed every state's website and find yours to be the most user-friendly. I especially like the language options you provide. Thanks for making my research project much easier. I wish all states would follow your lead!”
- “Great web site! Having had a son who graduated from Grinnell College last May and a daughter just completing her freshman year in a week, this site has become a favorite of mine. It helps me keep up on "what's happening" in Iowa. You see, I live in Portland, Maine and having your children go to school 1,500 miles from home can be difficult. Now I can click on [www.iowaces.org](http://www.iowaces.org) every so often and take a little tour of Iowa – it makes me feel like I'm right there with my daughter. Great fun!”
- Congratulations! The E-Gov Government Solutions Center is pleased to present a 2001 Trailblazer Award to Iowaccess in recognition of an outstanding electronic government best practice application that has streamlined operations and improved Government services." - Israel Feldman, Founder and Co-Chair (July 12, 2001)

## Electronic forms

The State, for example, is embarking on a massive effort to make government forms available on the Internet. Currently, job applicant forms are copied and forwarded to a number of agencies. In the near future, citizens interested in applying for positions can complete paperwork and update their information electronically – which means no more waiting to get the application and no more waiting in line to submit it. Citizens save time and money, state government reduces its printing and handling costs.

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### Resource Savings & Efficiencies

While Americans believe e-government will mean better government, they want to proceed carefully down the road toward digital interaction with security and privacy as their top priority. It's significant to note that the public's vision of e-government extends beyond efficient and high-quality services to a more informed and empowered citizenry and a more accountable government.

In general, costs for developing an Internet-based e-government service fall into five categories:

- Resources to get the organization ready to develop the service (including business process reengineering)
- Electronic access for end-users of the system
- Training and help desk support for the end-users
- Resources to develop the content of the service
- Computer and telecommunications infrastructure to host the e-government system

Within each of these categories, there may be one-time costs associated with initiating the project in addition to operational annual maintenance and development costs to keep it current. Savings and efficiencies associated with e-government services can typically be placed in three categories:

#### BETTER

- Consolidation of services - one-stop shopping, fewer steps in a process.
- Convenience - central location, more accessible locations.
- Improved accuracy, fewer errors, greater consistency, more standardization and always up-to-date.
- Enhanced information quality and more useful information.
- Innovation - new services and new ways of using information.
- More frequent communication (with those who desire it) - much faster information distribution.
- Wider communication ability.
- Larger number of inquiries, requests, processing, transactions handled with fewer, less expensive resources providing a higher quality of service to more people.
- Increased use of services - more people use services; same people use more services.
- Revenue generation - from customers, the general public and other agencies.
- More accountability - improved record keeping and more citizen participation in government.
- Human resource development - enhanced professional abilities and improved work skills.
- Greater involvement from others in administrative processes.
- Reduction in time citizens spend interacting with government.
- A larger number of citizens have accessibility to government.
- There's the capability for those outside Iowa to instantly see what's available.

#### FASTER

- Because services are accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the amount of response and waiting time for inquiries, requests, processing and transactions decreases significantly.
- The amount of time needed to distribute information to citizens as well as train employees is reduced.



#### CHEAPER

- Time savings/reducing repetitive rote work – Personnel can redirect more of their time to people, constituents and problem solving, and less on administrative processes like data entry, filing, organizing and other rote chores. The amount of time the customers spend in line, traveling to and from government facilities and filling out paper forms is also reduced.
- Cost savings - reduction in telephone, mailing, printing and travel costs in addition to reducing or avoiding other longer-term expenditures (such as full-time employees to provide services, building space and parking lots for employees, customer service counters and processing centers).
- For example, a state of Arizona study that found that on-line license renewals cost approximately \$2 per transaction compared to \$7 for over-the-counter transactions. That's a considerable saving considering Arizona renews about 800,000 licenses annually, resulting in a \$4 million annual savings.



## Why It's Better To Board Now Than Later

***"It is more important to know where you are going than to get there quickly."***

– Mabel Newcomber

While taking the steps toward a comprehensive digital government may not always be a smooth, simple journey, it's critical to understand why embracing it now makes sense.

Jim Chrisinger, Department of Management team leader, strategic planning and accountability, puts it simply: "While we're looking for ways to change the way we do business, we must also rethink our services and processes. Automating existing processes can dramatically reduce costs but

our thinking caps have to be on right to accomplish that. We can't just simply automate what we're doing now."

Any agency that's in the process of electronic integration can see there's a lot of hard work between the overall goal and where we are right now. It's important to remember, however, that it's not just an ITD job. Each entity must think hard about how they can harness technology.

Chrisinger also notes that while we need to "go electronic" we must continue providing services to those who can't access technology. In business-related areas, for example, there are greater technological capabilities than there may be in the public sector.

In the wake of Gov. Vilsack's recent budget reduction request, Chrisinger offers this advice: "Departments are under a lot of fiscal pressure. This is the time to bust barriers. Use it as leverage to clearing financial obstacles and use the sense of urgency to the state's advantage in looking at electronic integration. Technology is a piece of the solution to the financial problem."

To those uncertain about implementing technology sooner than later, think about this – Iowans expect the State to find ways to improve service, not just cut

(employees, budgets, etc.). Instead, we should rise to the challenge and communicate how we will reduce budgets while enhancing the services we deliver.

Almost everyone recalls when banks introduced ATM machines. Their purpose was to replace some over-the-counter transactions with a more efficient alternative. It was a win-win situation - banks saved a lot of money and customers preferred the speed and convenience of the ATM. Yes, there are times when face-to-face interaction is necessary but most likely not 100% of the time.

When it seems like a struggle to find 7% to cut, agencies can explore innovative solutions using technology as a tool. According to a recent presentation by Harvard professors Jerry Mechling and Lynda Applegate, often s projects ripe for the use of information technology can reduce costs up to 90%!

This is illustrated in one of the older electronic services offered to taxpayers - electronic filing of state and federal income tax returns. Begun in 1995, the participation has increased more than ten-fold. Nearly 500,000 income tax returns were filed electronically in the past year and the savings in processing costs have been substantial.

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Not only has paper processing declined, there has been increased accuracy. Fiscal resources previously earmarked to handle paper documents have been directed toward other critical needs within the agency.

With the current fiscal condition, it's understandable that some agencies may find the prospect of securing funds (or time) for new projects difficult. Rich Jacobs, Dept. of Revenue and Finance (IDRF) administrator of internal resource management division, agrees.

"Finding the right mix of technology and business management to recognize the benefits, redesign the process, construct, deploy and market the application isn't always easy. However, government agencies can assist each other in this effort by sharing success stories and challenges they've overcome."

The IDRF capitalized on the knowledge it gained from experience years ago through applications such as electronic filing of income tax returns, electronic payment of taxes and publishing nearly all department forms on the Internet, and took it one step further. Applications created during the last year have proven beneficial. Now taxpayers can:

- Electronically review the history of their tax payments
- Register electronically to conduct business with the

state

- File income tax returns via the Internet
- Request payments be debited from a bank account to make prior payments.

Through it all, the department learned that developing all these electronic services:

- Was a team process requiring commitment from the agency's business and technical staff
- Required the department to find partners, whether it be ITD staff or private vendors, to maximize the chance for success
- Demanded listening to customers, which prompted creation of an online survey appearing with each application to capture customer opinion and preferences
- Mandated measurement of the effectiveness of the programs and their use
- Required a commitment to market services (direct mailings promote services while internal customers are kept informed and encouraged to submit "E-Ideas" electronically).

"A meaningful measure of customer satisfaction is finding that if IDRF builds another on-line application, more than 90% of the customers indicate they will use the service," said Jacobs. "The bottom line - sites are being accessed frequently." These are just two of the

many comments received about electronic integration efforts:

- " We are moving back to Iowa to start this business because of the people, environment and state government. The process (combined business application) we just completed is a perfect example of why we want to live and work in Iowa."
- "I just used the on-line application to file my Iowa 2000 taxes. Wow, that was the best tax experience I ever had."

