

Modernization of State TANF Systems

Using the Web for Preeligibility Screening

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Executive Summary

Web technology has been widely embraced by State governments as a way to increase effectiveness, but these technical innovations have both a practical and a strategic effect. Web-based e-government changes the nature of the way government interacts with individual citizens; private businesses; and other federal, State, and local government partners. As Web and Internet technologies advance, they provide opportunities to improve public access to program information and services by breaking down barriers and redefining government-citizen interaction.

Objective of the Report

The objective of the report is to provide an overview of how States are using the Web to help the general public find and apply for aid. Approaches States have taken to build and operate interactive preeligibility screening (i.e., prescreening) and online application tools as a part of their Human Service websites are described. Readers can leverage the experiences described in this report to help them define and improve their websites. State Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs are the primary focus, although these prescreening and application tools tend to cut across programs.

Information for the Study

To collect information for this report, the study team used Internet search engines and preexisting lists of Human Services websites to identify and browse websites associated with each State and the District of Columbia. From that initial list, eleven State websites were identified as providing publicly accessible tools to assess program eligibility. Eight candidates were selected from that list for further investigation, based on the study purpose and scope (i.e., TANF domain, State operated, or functionality of the website). These eight candidates were contacted to determine if they should participate in telephone interviews regarding their tools. Based on that initial contact, several were removed from consideration (e.g., under development or outside the current scope and purpose of the study). Representatives from six States participated in telephone interviews to obtain insight into their experiences.* One Federal website also identified during the initial search was contacted and participated in the interviews. [Section 3](#) provides information on the insight obtained from the seven participating websites. [Appendix A](#) provides a summary of all the identified websites.

The following Websites are identified by the study as having interactive prescreening or online application capabilities:

- Eleven States provide prescreening tools for TANF and related HS programs: Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Washington. The study team interviewed representatives from Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington.
- One Federal Government-sponsored website, GovBenefits.gov, offers screening for federally sponsored benefit programs.
- Two local government-sponsored prescreening websites also are identified: Multnomah County, Oregon, and the City of Norfolk, Virginia. These websites are outside the primary focus of the study (State administered websites) and were not reviewed in detail.
- Three States provide online application for services: Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Washington. The Michigan application capability was not reviewed during the study.

* The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-13) requires clearance when more than nine non-federal government entities are involved.

Evolutionary Model

An evolutionary model provides a conceptual framework that guides website designers in planning and prioritizing the capabilities of State Human Service websites. Within this framework, program staff and website designers can set and achieve intermediate goals within a broader strategy. The report discusses the following five evolutionary stages of this model:

1. General information dissemination
2. Basic forms and referral
3. Personalized, interactive service filtering
4. Integrated screening and application processes
5. Comprehensive, individual self-service

Most of the websites reviewed are consistent with the first two stages of the model, while a few reflect capabilities in the third and fourth stages. Progress is being made toward the fifth stage.

Approaches and Experiences

Key aspects of the approaches States have taken and some of their collective experiences are highlighted below:

- **Outreach.** The desire to make HS programs and services more accessible to the general public is the reason most cited for building these websites. Although many of the prescreening and application websites originally may have been intended for general public use, workers or third-party service providers associated with hospitals, child care centers, and other community partners also became major users.
- **Benefits.** Qualitative benefits for clients using the interactive website include convenience, making better-informed decisions, better use of time, and the ability to stay connected with caseworkers. Benefits for others using the websites were also noted. Direct quantitative measures of benefits generally were not available because of a lack of specific pre- and post-website deployment measures. Website usage statistics generally are used to indicate benefit provided.
- **Multiple program focus.** The websites tend to consolidate pre-screening and online applications across many programs, furthering service integration strategies (e.g., *no wrong door* or *one-stop shopping* service delivery strategies). This requires broad representation and involvement of stakeholders throughout the lifecycle.
- **Resource locator.** A capability frequently encountered in the reviewed websites is a Resource Locator—a searchable or browsable directory that returns a list of providers and their contact information based on user criteria. This helps users with limited knowledge of benefit programs to search for services based on categories of user needs.
- **Preeligibility screening.** Preeligibility screening is anonymous, generally designed to perform a quick look, requiring minimal user effort and time, and designed to err on screening someone in rather than out. A typical philosophy mentioned was *if we can just get them in the door, then we can look for ways to help*. Prescreening tools help the potential applicant separate those programs that can help from those for which they clearly are not qualified, without the user having to research all the programs first.

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- **Application processing.** For those websites accepting online applications, use of the application tool by professional HS workers is significant and should be considered in the design and implementation, even when intending the tool to be used by the general public. Different user interfaces may be necessary to allow the tool to be effective for all possible users. The application submittal date is based on the online submission date. Processing of online applications is merged with the traditional back-end application processes and back-end computer systems to keep impact on those systems and worker practices to a minimum.
 - **Privacy and security.** Many approaches and features were employed to protect user-entered data. These include anonymous prescreening, purging prescreening data after the interactive session ends, securing data transmission with Secure Socket Layer (SSL), and timing out the user input screen when left idle. Privacy policies are evident on the majority of websites reviewed.
 - **Underlying technology.** Technology used in implementing these prescreening and application tools varied, depending on the overall functionality, features, and interfaces supported by the websites. Multitier architectures were used to implement the software applications. Pennsylvania provided an electronic interface to transfer application data to its back-end computer systems. As these application tools tend to evolve once deployed, an adaptable system and software application architecture is essential for long-term maintenance.
 - **Development processes.** The scope and formality of the development processes varied, from small grassroots efforts supported by State-staffed teams to larger contractor-assisted projects. Costs and time to develop and field the automated tools also varied. Complexity of the tools and the functionality, features, and integration with the back-end computer systems appeared to be a factor in determining process formality. An evolutionary delivery strategy was often cited, where the emphasis was to build an initial capability; field it as quickly as possible; and then iterate to incorporate lessons learned, add additional programs, and update functionality, user features, and website content.
 - **Engineering and management practices.** Even with an informal or prototype-driven process, good software engineering and management practices were still recognized as essential. The practices should be appropriate to the processes employed and consider the extended lifetime in which the website and interactive tools will be used. Sound website configuration management practices are needed to manage frequent releases of webpages and the interactive tools. Compatibility with overarching State standards and conventions is essential because websites generally are turned over for State operation and maintenance.
 - **Usability.** Usability of the websites often was cited as a primary design factor. Websites should be easy to find, navigate, and understand and should provide role-appropriate user interfaces (e.g., novice, intermediate, or power user). Website designs generally took into account multiple user languages, limited use of program and technical jargon, provided Section 508 accessibility, and included other essential attributes in keeping with good Website content organization and design practices. Advertising the website is critical to getting them used.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In only a few years time, the Web¹ has transformed many aspects of daily life. It is a technological and social phenomenon—a ubiquitous, easy-to-use, global information and service delivery utility. It can be accessed from home, work, school, library, café, or car and in just about every possible place, fixed or mobile, at any time. For a perspective on the rapid rate of innovation and adoption of the Web, one need only look back a few years.

The Web was invented by Tim Berners-Lee in 1989. He created the first web browser and server in 1990.² Concurrently with the emergence of the Web, the Internet began its transformation from a closed scientific and research orientation to an open, commercial channel. In 1991, the National Science Foundation lifted restrictions on commercial use of its backbone communications infrastructure, enabling the commercialization of the Internet. In 1994, Pizza Hut began to accept orders over the Internet, and the first cyberbank (First Virtual) and online radio station (RTFM from Las Vegas) appeared.³ In 1998, the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL) adopted the Uniform Electronic Transaction Act (UETA),⁴ and in 2000, the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (E-SIGN)⁵ was enacted. These Acts gave electronic signatures and records the same validity and enforceability as their manual and paper-based counterparts. These events established the technology and policy frameworks that enable global business to be conducted in the cyberworld as in the physical world, enabling the use of the Web to grow exponentially.

The growth rate of Internet use in the United States is approximately two million new Internet users per month, with more than half of the nation online.⁶ As of September 2001, 143 million Americans (about 54 percent of the population) were using the Internet, with more than 66 percent of the population using computers. Children and teenagers use computers and the Internet more than any other age group. Internet use is increasing for people regardless of income, education, age, races, ethnicity, or gender. Computers at schools substantially narrow the gap in computer usage rates for children from high- and low-income families. The highest growth rate among different types of households is for single mothers with children. People with mental or physical disabilities, however, are less likely than those without such disabilities to use computers or the Internet. Legal and technical frameworks are in place to reduce these barriers.⁷

People's expectations of what they should be able to access and transact on the Web are growing.⁸ Two-thirds of all Americans say that they expect to be able to find reliable and up-to-date information about health care, services from Government Agencies, news, and shopping on the Web.⁹ The Internet is becoming a preferred means of interaction between the public (i.e., citizens) and Federal, State, or local government entities.¹⁰ Individuals expect the same level of service from the government that they get from commercial entities. People access online government to search for information on government policy and programs, plan tourism and recreation opportunities, conduct research, fill out government forms, find election information, file taxes, obtain or renew licenses (e.g., professional, vehicle, fishing, or hunting), pay fines, and almost every other conceivable type of transaction. Government workers need only assist when something outside the norm must be addressed.

Many initiatives are underway to further leverage the Web for government entities at federal,¹¹ State,¹² and local levels,¹³ allowing governments to interact with individuals, businesses, and each other.¹⁴ Government enterprises, however, face key legal, political, and financial challenges. People rely on government-published information, requiring objectivity, timeliness, and accuracy. E-government, just like private industry, is expected to be always open, including nights and weekends, and to provide basic electronic customer services (e.g., responding to e-mail in a timely manner). Government-sponsored information and services must be inclusive and accessible to a broad constituency with minimal technology barriers (e.g., support for many vendor browsers and versions). Rigorous security and privacy

practices must be implemented and enforced to safeguard personal data and the integrity of any government-provided information (e.g., protection from hacking).

For the State Human Services (HS) business area, moving government to the Internet is not just a technology challenge; it also requires rethinking institutions, policies, and procedures. Citizens expect user-centric access to government services, where agency jurisdictional boundaries are transparent (e.g., federal, State, or local)¹⁵. The Web provides the technical means to enable self-directed service. Processes previously performed with specialized staff in government offices now are available to individuals to execute anytime and anyplace. Users are presented with personalized views of government services, even though the organizations and disparate back-end (e.g., mainframe) systems themselves essentially may be stovepiped.

1.2 Study Purpose and Scope

Reflecting on how much has changed since the Web was created, it is expected that future government business practices will be similarly transformed from what is known today. This report looks at a part of the transformation currently underway and describes approaches States¹⁶ are taking to implement publicly accessible and self-administered preeligibility screening tools¹⁷ using the Web. In addition to prescreening functionality, insight into implementations of online applications for services is included. The objective is to increase awareness across States and to convey insights and experiences in building and using publicly accessible online prescreening and application tools.

The primary business area considered was State Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs, although the websites tend to span multiple programs. Other Federal and local government efforts also are noted, as applicable. Primary users of this report are State HS program and information technology (IT) professionals.

1.3 Approach

This report is based on information collected from January through March 2003. The study team identified State TANF and HS-related websites and browsed them to identify applicable candidates for further study. Initial websites were identified using the following methods:

- Exploring hyperlinks available from federal and State websites¹⁸
- Using Internet search engines with search criteria based on common State and organization names, as well as TANF and HS program terms¹⁹
- Leveraging insight from the National Human Services Information Technology Resource Center (NHSITRC) TANF Technical Advisory Group (TAG) members²⁰ and others familiar with State and federal initiatives

The study team reviewed these candidate websites to identify webpages with information relevant to TANF programs and also browsed pages related to the organizations sponsoring the website. In general, this approach led to the home pages of HS, social services, or workforce development departments or divisions (e.g., HS Agency).²¹ At times, the scope was expanded to include the State portal; many States implement pages advertising their e-government services at that level. The research also includes a cursory look at federal e-government initiatives.²²

The primary focus of the search is to identify interactive tools or information resources that would help a user unfamiliar with the HS Agency or its programs and services to answer the following questions:

- What types of assistance are available?
- Am I eligible for the assistance?
- How should I apply for the assistance?

[Appendix A](#) lists the reviewed websites.

In general, directly accessing program specific pages by using Internet search engines did not immediately identify the prescreening tools. Only when moving to higher levels of the webpage hierarchy are the tools evident. Applying the technique of starting with the most specific pages and working *out and up* gives reasonable coverage of the website and leads to the identification of several prescreening tools and other information discovery aids. Although it is not completely certain that all capabilities were identified, the authors are confident that if a prescreening tool was not found during this review, a user could miss it as well.

From the initial set of websites, the study team selected a representative sample for follow-on investigation, selecting those offering publicly accessible prescreening or online application tools. Eight States and one federal website that were within the study scope and purpose were contacted for follow-up interviews. Six States and the one federal website were determined to be within the scope and purpose of the study. Telephone interviews were then held with representatives of the seven websites to gain insight into general use and operation of the website, overall technical characteristics, and associated experiences.²³

[Section 2](#) summarizes the insights gained from browsing all the websites and the discussions with the seven website representatives and others. [Section 3](#) presents further detail on each of the seven websites that were reviewed in detail.

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2 Study Results

A review of State HS websites identified 11 State-sponsored websites that provide publicly accessible prescreening or application tools of varying capability and program coverage (Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts,²⁴ Michigan,²⁵ Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Washington).²⁶ In addition, two local government-sponsored websites were identified: one provided by Multnomah County, Oregon, and the other by the City of Norfolk, Virginia. One Federal Government website, GovBenefits.gov, consolidates prescreening across many federal programs.

These websites allow the general public (or third parties acting on their behalf) to identify, screen, or apply for program services using the Web.²⁷ One website, Vermont, is designed to be used with the assistance of trained workers with access to a State intranet. A demonstration of the Vermont website is available online.²⁸

[Appendix A](#) notes the reviewed websites and their basic characteristics. [Section 3](#) provides details on selected websites.

2.1 Evolutionary Model

During the website review, the study team noticed that their capabilities tended to cluster into one of five categories (or stages), primarily determined by the functionality offered and the level of integration between the websites, the business processes, and the back end eligibility computer systems. Each stage represents a set of functionality, features, and business integration leading to a full-service, electronically enabled Government-to-Citizen channel. Capabilities at the higher stages of the model generally build on those of a lower stage. Most of the websites reviewed ([Appendix A](#)) are consistent with the first two stages of the model, while a few reflect capabilities in the third and fourth stages. Website representatives noted progress toward the fifth stage.

This conceptual framework may help program staff and website designers envision and prioritize the capabilities of evolving websites, setting intermediate business and technical goals within a broader strategy. [Appendix B](#) lists sample key objectives, goals and challenges for each of the evolutionary stages. The evolutionary stages are as follows:

- 1. General information dissemination.** This is the most basic form of web presence encountered. It includes websites that provide a place to distribute information about the HS Agency, the TANF program, and related services. This is analogous to an *electronic brochure*. The website provides the reader with an online directory to answer the most basic questions, such as what programs are available and where to go for more information.

In general, these websites help a potential client identify contacts for obtaining applications or further information. These include references to State, local, or private provider offices; addresses; telephone numbers; and, occasionally, program-specific e-mail addresses.

Automated aids to find specific services based on the website user's needs generally are not available. Website users can browse the webpages manually or use a website-provided search capability to identify information, which may or may not be applicable to their specific needs.
- 2. Basic forms and referral.** These websites identify the offered programs, provide basic guidelines for eligibility, and describe how to apply for each program's services. Program descriptions and requirements usually are provided as narrative, including program history, goals, and conditions for financial or nonfinancial factors (e.g., family, residency, age, income, resources, and work). To determine whether a program can help with a user's needs and to determine eligibility, the user must browse the descriptions to identify the appropriate programs and correlate that user's unique situation with the program's stated goals and conditions. Basic applications or forms that

the user can print and manually complete often are provided (e.g., Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format [PDF]). Entry of data into the downloaded forms for printing also may be supported.

These websites make it convenient for someone to identify an initial set of appropriate programs and to begin the application process. Users can explore descriptions of services offered and fill out an application at a location and time where they are most comfortable, such as in their homes, offices, or public libraries. Applications may be submitted via postal mail or in person at a local office. The applicant still must rely on agency eligibility workers to identify all the programs and services needed by the client.

Tools may be available to identify the offices in which to apply, such as mapping programs to broad categories of need or types of services (e.g., family, food, employment, housing, and cash assistance) or locating local offices by county, city, or ZIP Code within a convenient distance from the applicant's residence.²⁹

3. **Personalized, interactive service filtering.** These websites represent a shift in how organizations provide information and client access to services. They provide interactive tools that help the potential client identify the most appropriate programs—without having to spend significant time understanding all the programs—and map the programs to the client's individual needs.

These websites allow clients to describe a unique situation by going through an online (i.e., guided) interview such as an eligibility calculator or a series of forms. The online interview may ask only the most important eligibility (i.e., categorical) questions, or it could be more in depth and personalized (e.g., names of family members used in questions and responses). The tools generally return links or descriptions of appropriate programs or services and a rationale for the selections. The tools also may explicitly identify programs/services for which a client is not qualified (and the reason), provide calculated financial support estimates or limits, or show benefits by family member.

The sequence of questions a user answers may be predefined for all users, or it can be adapted based on an individual user's answers. In general, there is no data coupling between the online prescreening session and the application process. The prescreening session usually is anonymous, and data is expunged when the session completes. Any presumptive eligibility determination made by the tools usually is qualified with suggestions that the user follow up with the appropriate office.

4. **Integrated screening and application processes.** An online prescreening session may serve as a front end to a full or partial online application process for eligible programs or services. If the user chooses to apply, information from the screening may be used to populate fields in the application forms, reducing the need for reentering data.

In general, the interface between the acceptance of the online application and the back-end eligibility system is designed to have minimum effect on the back-end eligibility computer system and associated application processing workflow. The interface with the back-end system may be automated partially or fully. The date from online submission is used as a reference for application processing time requirements. Not all interaction is electronic; signatures and other evidence must be presented during in-person interviews.

5. **Comprehensive, individualized self-service.** Although not fully realized at this time, several States reference near- and long-term efforts aimed at building full self-service, client-centric portals. The vision is to enable for clients to actively participate online in managing the client-program relationship throughout the entire enrollment period, not just during the application process. Just as in the banking industry—where online, full-service access to banking

functionality is becoming readily available—the HS client could have online access to view and update case data and electronically interact with caseworkers and others, when and where needed.

2.2 Approaches and Experiences

This section discusses characteristics of the interactive websites that government entities have implemented and their experiences developing and using them. The statements reflect a composite compiled by browsing the websites listed in [Appendix A](#), holding discussions with representatives of the websites noted in [Section 3](#), and drawing on the experiences of the study team.

The information presented here is not intended to be exhaustive but rather indicative of what others are doing and experiencing. In addition, the authors did not attempt to enumerate every possible capability for each website investigated, but rather to point out representative websites and capabilities. See the descriptions in [Section 3](#) and [Appendix A](#) for additional information.

These items are presented in no particular order of importance and must be interpreted within each State’s context, whether the State plans to pursue the development of a new website or refine an existing one.

The items are organized into the following categories:

- [Motivation and Benefits](#)
- [Multiple Program Focus](#)
- [Functional Characteristics](#)
- [Website Technology and Life-Cycle Processes](#)
- [Usability](#)

2.2.1 Motivation and Benefits

Items in this category address reasons the websites were built, any realized or expected benefits received from using them, and issues in obtaining measures to determine benefits realized.

2.2.1.1 Outreach

The desire to make HS programs and services more accessible to the general public is the reason most cited for building these websites. They attempt to reduce the frustration clients³⁰ encounter when they try to get help, to allow clients to self-initiate getting assistance, to break down barriers,³¹ and to “get people through the door.” Although the websites offer additional benefits for HS professionals, this is not noted as a major reason for building these websites.

The number of applications and inquiries received through the websites generally is a small part of those received through other channels (e.g., phone, mail, and office visits). There is a general belief, however, that a website-supported channel is becoming more important and that use is growing.³²

2.2.1.2 Client benefits

The following is a partial list of expected benefits for those seeking assistance:

- **Personalization.** The website’s interactive tools let individuals characterize their situation and find the programs most applicable to them without having to review all the program descriptions.
- **Making informed decisions.** The website helps clients determine whether they meet basic eligibility requirements and make informed decisions about whether to visit an office for a full screening.

-
- **Client convenience.** In rural areas or when transportation is problematic, the applicant does not need to go to the office to initiate the application process.
 - **Better use of time.** The client is better prepared, knows what to expect, and has a list of required documentation before meeting with a caseworker. This preparation allows the caseworker to process the application quickly.
 - **Getting connected.** The website provides clients with a way to get and stay connected to caseworkers and gives caseworkers another channel to support clients.

2.2.1.3 Benefits to others

Although the websites focus on the general public and target those seeking assistance, they are not the only users or beneficiaries. States experience overwhelming support and use of the websites by third parties acting on the client's behalf (e.g., community partners and other professionals internal and external to the HS Agency). These groups are beginning to rely on these websites. The following are some additional users and corresponding benefits:

- **Other program workers.** Individuals in a State HS Agency (e.g., those responsible for food stamps) may use the tools to help their clients identify programs and services in other agencies (e.g., heating and energy), even when the worker may have limited firsthand knowledge of those services. Having these tools and information readily available helps with implementing “no wrong door”³³ customer service strategies. This also helps address staff turnover because the knowledge is readily available to all staff regardless of time spent on the job. Any employee can look up information for clients or allow clients to do it for themselves (e.g., accessing kiosks in highly frequented agency lobbies, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles).
- **Eligibility workers, field staff.** If clients have a better understanding of the programs, they will be better prepared to answer questions and provide documentation, than if they had no knowledge of program goals and requirements. This help to quickly identify the most appropriate services.
- **Third parties.** Professionals in hospitals, child care centers, clinics, and other locales acting on behalf of the client can access and quickly screen individuals when initial contact is made. Services offered by these third parties may be made available to cover any gap if the individual does not qualify fully for public services. Filing applications online may help reduce the cycle time required by third-party organizations to get applications submitted and services funded.
- **Advocates.** General advocate enthusiasm for these websites is noted as a way for individuals needing help to get connected and stay connected.
- **Students and researchers.** The websites increase general awareness of rules and considerations to qualify for programs.
- **Legislative aids and other support networks.** Individuals with public contact have a clearly recognizable reference that they can provide to someone needing help (e.g., branding — referring to an easily remembered and widely recognized website).

2.2.1.4 Measurement baseline

Experiences with the interactive websites are encouraging, with widespread belief that they offer tangible benefit to clients and others. No specific measures or formal studies of hard business value are available currently. Organizations should consider establishing a measurement baseline of existing eligibility screening and application processing practices before the website is designed and deployed. This may help quantify any impact the website may have.³⁴ [Section 3](#) lists usage statistics available for selected websites.

A common approach for determining potential benefits is to map webpages to functional areas, associating web server access and page statistics with those functions. For websites using databases to hold website information or applications, statistics generated from the database management system (DBMS) also may be used. Example measures include eligibility questionnaires attempted or completed; program pages browsed; number of applications started, completed, or abandoned; e-mail contacts; and application downloads. Reliable web server metrics (such as visits and the average time for a visit rather than page hits) are noted as helpful in determining usage.³⁵ Estimates of private (e.g., citizen) versus professional (e.g., field worker) use of the website may be made by filtering on access times, length of visit, or Internet Protocol (IP) addresses.³⁶

2.2.2 Multiple Program Focus

Most of the prescreening and online application tools support multiple programs or services. This is expected, given emphasis on service integration and initiatives to leverage back-end eligibility computer systems across programs.³⁷ This broad, multiprogram context affects how the user perceives the Agency and who should participate in defining, designing, and operating these websites.

2.2.2.1 Service integration

Clients may not know that a particular agency, department, or office is responsible for administering a program or service that satisfies their immediate needs (e.g., telephone books may be organized by departments rather than programs or services). These web-based, prescreening tools may hide State or local organizational structures by presenting a common cross-program view that is loosely coupled with back-end eligibility systems. This provides *one face* for the government and its services. Many States list e-services on their main State portals.³⁸

2.2.2.2 Champions and sponsors

These websites, as highly visible channels for reaching the public, always are subject to interest and scrutiny. Champions and sponsors traditionally include the Governor, as well as the executive, legislative, and program levels of State government. To have the greatest chance of success, others with legitimate input should be involved as early in the development life cycle as appropriate to build support and buy-in.

2.2.2.3 Stakeholders

Involving clients and others with a vested interest in using the website is helpful for identifying capabilities and designing a website to serve their needs; however, involvement by a potentially large number of stakeholders may become unmanageable. The numbers must be kept small, involving only those appropriate to each stage of the developmental life cycle. Individuals able to cover multiple perspectives may be the most appropriate participants. Key types of individuals to include are those having the following perspectives:

- **Business, policy, and legal.** This includes familiarity with the programs and rules, Internet privacy issues, and other broader policy and practice issues.
- **Client.** This includes client advocates, community services organizations, church organizations, support groups, and an ombudsman. These individuals ensure that the look and feel, navigation aids, webpage text, language(s), and automated features are appropriate for the client.
- **Extended user community.** Third parties acting on the client's behalf may make heavy use of websites originally intended for client use. Individuals to be represented may include workers in the field or service providers at hospitals, child care centers, clinics, and churches, as well as other State Agency personnel.

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- **Technical and program.** Multidisciplinary teams form the basic project team. They should have expertise in the eligibility and program application areas, the back-end and web technology platforms. They should also possess a working knowledge of any overarching State or departmental website conventions or guidelines. This reduces risk of rework if the website is to be turned over for State operation and maintenance.
 - **Security.** These individuals augment the basic project team. They are responsible for ensuring that appropriate Internet information security and privacy mechanisms are in place, that these mechanisms meet department and State guidelines, and that they operate as intended. This includes any policies and operating procedures for system administrative staff.

2.2.3 Functional Characteristics

Items in this category address the wide range of capabilities incorporated into the websites.

2.2.3.1 Resource locators

Although *resource locator* capabilities are not included as a part of this study, they often are a part of the reviewed websites. Locator capabilities provide a searchable or browsable directory that returns lists of providers based on user criteria.³⁹ Some inherent knowledge of the programs or providers appears to be required to use some locator tools effectively. These locator tools may aid the general public, as well as other State professionals.⁴⁰

2.2.3.2 Preeligibility screening

Those websites providing a self-administered prescreening capability use many different approaches and styles—from short, calculator-style surveys (selecting from predefined responses) to comprehensive, multipage, *fill-in-the-blank* forms and self-guided, *conversation-oriented* sessions. Questions include financial and nonfinancial information, including: household individuals (names), resources, expenses, medical, education, and work. In general, data collection is kept to a minimum, with the focus on the significant (i.e., categorical) criteria.

Some general characteristics of the prescreening tool functionality are as follows:

- **Screen in, not out.** The websites provide a preliminary indication of eligibility to the user, not a final determination. In all cases, whether a client is screened in or out of a program, the client is encouraged to contact someone at the Agency to follow up on the prescreening results. To help encourage this contact, the tools tend to set the eligibility decision boundaries to screen someone (that may be borderline) into the program, rather than out. A typical philosophy mentioned is “if we can just get them in the door, then we can look for ways to help.” Rules associated with the prescreening tools therefore are set to minimize barriers to enrollment—to err on the side of screening someone in rather than turning them away. This strategy appears to work well.
- **Results.** Each prescreening tool provides different levels of detailed information. Some items the tools include in their results are:
 - summary of the user input⁴¹
 - list of applicable or nonapplicable programs or services⁴²
 - list of who in the family may be eligible for the services
 - summary description of the program, with links to program-specific pages or service providers
 - description of assistance amounts or limits, client costs⁴³
 - general reason(s) for denial

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- link(s) to applications for service or suggestions for situations that may not have been covered in the prescreening questionnaire

All results are qualified (e.g., you may or may not be eligible for assistance).

2.2.3.3 Application processing

Two websites (Pennsylvania and Washington) provide the ability to submit an online application for services. Information from the Pennsylvania prescreening questionnaire may be copied into the online application (if the user chooses to prescreen). For both States, the applications tend to be completed both by those applying for services and by field workers in hospitals and other locations. Eligibility workers and other professionals tend to use the application tools more often than the general public.

Some general characteristics of the application tool functionality are as follows:

- **Multiple sessions.** Completing an application could take significant time. The websites provide a way for the applicant to save work in progress and return later. A status is provided to show the major steps completed and those remaining. Pennsylvania has a time limit in which to complete an application (30 days), while Washington does not.
- **Data quality.** The data provided via the online application is of reasonable quality and completeness, very similar to that obtained by the paper application filed in an office. The interactive tools support basic user input checking, such as required fields and syntactically or lexically correct data fields. Sometimes, users omit data that they do not like to provide over the Web (e.g., Social Security Number [SSN]). Missing data is obtained with a telephone or follow-up visit in person. Information submitted via third parties at hospitals, child care centers, and other locations generally are thorough and reliable.
- **Application date and signature.** The application submittal date is based on the online submission date. For Pennsylvania, the application date is the next business day from when the online application is submitted. The applicant also prints (or requests a copy by mail) a signature page to sign and return. For Washington, the application date is the same as the online submittal. The applicant must go to an office to sign the application. Workers check the submitted application data for reasonableness and contact the individual if clarifications or further information is needed.

2.2.3.4 Maintaining privacy and security

The prescreening and application tools provide many features to ensure privacy and security of user-entered data. Website privacy policies are readily available. Noted privacy and security features are as follows:

- **Anonymous prescreening.** Prescreening is anonymous and does not store identifying information.⁴⁴ The data from the prescreening session is purged after the session is completed or abandoned.
- **Secure data.** Users provide detailed personal data as part of the online application process (e.g., name, address, birth date, and SSN). Access is protected with user-provided identifications (IDs) and passwords. In-process data is stored on the website databases and cannot be viewed by staff until the user submits the application formally. The Secure Socket Layer (SSL) protocol is used to protect website and web browser exchange of data on the Internet.
- **Timeout.** Some websites provide a *timeout* feature. After a period of user inactivity, the tool times out and traverses to another, less sensitive page.⁴⁵ This keeps sensitive information from being displayed for a long time (e.g., when a user steps away from the computer).

2.2.4 Website Technology and Life-Cycle Processes

Items in this category address the wide range of technical solutions and the processes used to develop the websites ([Section 3](#) contains website-specific information).

2.2.4.1 Software application architecture

An adaptable software application⁴⁶ design or framework is essential for long-term maintenance.⁴⁷ The tools may start out narrowly focused, but they tend to grow and change over time, reaching a point where they may no longer easily scale up or become difficult to maintain. Websites developed for a division and a specific program may be hosted and supported on State-wide centers and will need to adhere to State-wide IT (e.g., Web) conventions. The following are some aspects to consider:

- **User interface control.** JavaScript is predominant as the language executing on the user's (browser) platform, to implement rich user-interface functionality, such as data entry validation of forms and dynamic generation of questions based on user input. The level of functionality offered to the user varies, from lexical and syntactic edits of fields (e.g., numbers in a ZIP Code) to some semantic checks (e.g., age-specific questions asked for only those identified within an age bracket, such as pregnancy status for female household members). Some tools control the user interface more than others (e.g., taking over control of the back button to disable page navigation from outside the software application). A few websites indicate preferences for one browser platform over another (e.g., "works best with" statements).
- **Eligibility rule processing.** An important part of the development is codifying and representing the various program and policy requirements in web-based prescreening questions, which facilitates collecting accurate data. Adjustments to the rules and their thresholds are based on periodic adjustments in the back-end eligibility systems. Rule processing must account for program-specific differences (e.g., poverty thresholds) and location-specific conditions (e.g., county-specific limits). Strategies to define the detail of data collected to support making presumptive eligibility decisions and manage any context-dependent thresholds should be defined up front.⁴⁸

Different technical approaches are used for representing and processing rules, such as coding the rules in software components or using rule-based or table-driven approaches. For some websites,⁴⁹ factoring eligibility rules separately from other program logic allows program and other staff to understand and refine the rules without any special programming knowledge.⁵⁰

- **Additional programs.** Increasing the scope of the HS programs supported by the website not only affects the harmonization of rules across programs but also can affect the flow of questions in the user interface. Questions and the order in which they are presented should be factored to allow for common information to be entered once and used across programs (e.g., demographic information).

2.2.4.2 System integration and workflow coupling

The prescreening tools are generally built as standalone applications with no persistent storage for user-entered data.⁵¹ These tools tend to have little direct coupling to other system's software applications or their databases.

For the two online application tools, a significant challenge is developing the software to transfer data accurately between the web-based application and the back-end eligibility computer systems. As the websites tend to evolve over time, increasing both in functionality and number of programs covered, a technical integration strategy should be considered early in the design process, even if it will be implemented fully in later releases. The following are some considerations for this strategy:

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- **Loosely coupled.** In general, the connection with the back-end eligibility computer systems is nonintrusive and encapsulated. The two online application tools each use a separate database to store the online application information. Washington sends e-mail notification to the workers when an application is submitted, where they can access and print the application data through a web link. Data from the front-end application system is not transmitted electronically to the back-end eligibility system. The Pennsylvania approach uses an Extensible Markup Language (XML) document, transferred with a software application-to-application interface to submit application data to the eligibility computer system.
 - **Paper application consistency.** The websites may collect data from the users from many screens, with composite data elements based on one or more program-specific paper applications. If paper applications (or their interpretation) change, the impact on the website questions, screen flow, and data elements must be reviewed. The risk is that paper applications and the electronic website equivalent(s) may not correspond.
 - **Workflow impact.** Because online application data flows tend to merge with the traditional back-end processing—whether data comes from the Web or from other means—minimal change in the eligibility workflow is needed. Impact on the business process, however—no matter how subtle—still must be addressed. Changes to work habits of those individuals affected by the online application process should be monitored and supported continually (e.g., workers remembering to check e-mail for new applications if they are accustomed to using a paper-based process).
 - **Heterogeneous technology.** If applications for multiple agencies or organizations are supported, not every organization may be able to accept online applications. The website must allow for both online and manual (i.e., paper) applications to be generated and submitted. As the different backend computer systems are retooled, those computer systems can then take advantage of online submittal capabilities. This heterogeneous data integration strategy allows for the website and interfacing computer systems to evolve independently and provide backward-compatible interfaces with one another.

2.2.4.3 Development process

Many different approaches to defining, constructing, and deploying the websites are used. The following discusses the way these websites have developed:

- **Prototyping.** The use of evolving executable prototypes is mentioned frequently to refine the content, functionality, and features of the website. Essential skills for the core team are hands-on knowledge of web-based software technology and an in-depth understanding of the programs and their eligibility criteria. This background allows the team to produce prototypes quickly to obtain feedback from a wider set of stakeholders and to keep the software focused on obtaining the appropriate level of data for the screening objectives (e.g., quick look or comprehensive application).
- **Process discipline.** Some websites start as small, office- or division-centric efforts and evolve, while others are part of larger projects involving multiple departments and contractors. An overarching software development methodology and disciplined development practices appropriate to the circumstances are required. Practices to track and control both webpage content and software application changes are essential to evolving the website in an effective manner (e.g., configuration management).

Some websites were initiated at a time when States were still establishing their web-based standards. Anyone developing a website with the potential to be used State-wide may be subject to State-wide web content or software application requirements. In this case, the developer should

invest time up front to understand these technical requirements. The risk is rework that may delay the website's release on State-operated computers.

- **Succession planning.** As State budgets and staffing levels shrink, individuals with detailed understanding of the website and the software applications may become unavailable. Because these prescreening and online application websites tend to evolve over many years, it is critical to maintain continuity between those currently maintaining the website and the initial contributors. Maintenance staff needs to understand the long-range business objectives and initial design decisions.
- **Development costs.** The costs of these websites vary considerably.⁵² Simple eligibility prescreening websites may be developed for a few hundred hours of effort at a cost of less than \$100,000, while comprehensive websites as part of modernization projects are budgeted at several million dollars over many years. These larger efforts provide a full set of functionality, integrated in real time with the back-end computer systems, and are delivered on new technical platforms. The smaller efforts tend to be standalone tools hosted on existing State data centers. Larger efforts implement a formal project management process and include use of contractors, while smaller ones are done in house with a few State employees working as a multidiscipline team and reviewing their work with stakeholders when appropriate. In-house teams are augmented by consultant expertise when needed.

Ways to reduce costs include knowledge of preexisting State standards and conventions, experience with web-based systems, and access to a development and operational platform configuration. None of these websites is inherently resource-intensive, so modest platforms based on the personal computer (PC) may be used to develop and test the website's functionality before hosting on the operational configurations (i.e., in general, sharing resources on enterprise-class servers).

- **Timeframes.** The timeframe to release the initial websites varies considerably,⁵³ ranging from a few months to about a year from the time a decision is made to build the website to when it is initially released. Having a vision for the website and the desire to set up a framework and get something useful on the Web quickly are common themes. Maintenance releases of evolving functionality occur between once every few months and semiannually.

Once the first release is fielded, excitement from the user and program community tends to grow, and more capabilities are envisioned. Most websites therefore take an evolutionary approach, where feedback from use of the website is considered along with an incremental release plan that adds functionality, increases program coverage, and adds user features. Early releases are scoped to address essential capabilities within budgets and desired release dates. Later releases add value by including features that improve user experiences.

- **Piloting.** Deploying the website for piloting could require some innovative approaches. In general, a *stealth* deployment strategy is used (where the Universal Resource Locator [URL] for the website is not widely publicized). This approach reduces the chances of those outside the target pilot group finding and accessing the website.⁵⁴ Once operational testing is completed, broad advertising of the website then would occur.

Piloting with community partners is a good way to fine-tune the websites.⁵⁵ For online applications, piloting is useful especially when exercising business processes for those handling applications. Even if the online application for services is designed to have minimum effect on the workers, it is important to address any behavior changes (such as checking e-mail every day to look for new applications).

- **Advertising.** While planning the website, it is important to establish a communications strategy and allocate adequate advertising budget up front. *Getting the word out* to clients and community

service providers is critical to website use. Typical ways to advertise include placing brochures at State or local offices, as well as word of mouth (e.g., working with schools, Parent Teacher Associations, and community providers).

Mass media advertising campaigns also may be very effective,⁵⁶ but the cost of State-wide radio or television advertising campaigns could be significant (e.g., up to several million dollars). Mass media public service announcements may not be free and may require a quid pro quo arrangement by purchasing equivalent airtime. It cannot be guaranteed that news organizations give priority to covering and publishing any rollout announcements, especially if other events they consider more newsworthy occur on the same day. These announcements tend to be one time only (e.g., newscasts), while getting the word out to a broad and diverse user community requires repeated attempts.

2.2.5 Usability

Items in this category relate to making the website easy to find, navigate, and use.⁵⁷

2.2.5.1 Easy to find

To support outreach initiatives, the websites must be easy to identify. To enable this, links often are publicized in multiple places, including the State portal (e.g., under Citizen Services listings), on the HS Department pages, with other cooperating websites, and on program-specific pages. Common indexes implemented in the webpages' left margin frequently point to the prescreening tools (e.g., a heading of "Am I eligible" or "E-services"). The ability to find the prescreening or online application website start page within 3 *clicks* is mentioned as one heuristic.

To make the websites easy to remember, some support multiple domain names, using several easy-to-remember names and variants registered in multiple, top-level domains.⁵⁸ Webpage redirection frequently is used to forward web browser page requests to the official website.

2.2.5.2 Role-specific user interfaces

The prescreening and application tools generally make minimal assumptions about what the user understands about the programs and the intake process; however, websites initially intended to serve the general public frequently are adopted and used by field staff or other professionals. Interfaces designed for the novice are not efficient for the experienced, especially when prescreening or filing applications for many clients each week. Website designers should accommodate the tacit level of understanding, usage environment, and capabilities of the principal users.⁵⁹

2.2.5.3 User-friendliness

Many different approaches and techniques are used to collect information for the prescreening and service search tools. Overall, fundamentally good web design practices are noted as essential to making the tools useful.⁶⁰ Piloting helps to work the kinks out and refine the interfaces. Guidelines to improving usability include the following:

- **Limit jargon.** Webpages generally appear to limit terminology and provide a nonintimidating vocabulary written for the expected users, with explanations or plain-text help for entries.⁶¹ The questions presented in the tools should be simple, direct, and easy to understand so that the user can answer them accurately. Some content developers suggest writing to the fourth grade level as a guide to keep content simple and straightforward. Advocates and other field staff may be used to review the websites and keep content consistent with the primary user's tacit level of understanding.

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- **Less is more.** The prescreening or application tools must be considered in the context of the overall website structure and content, not just as a standalone application. It is important to keep the website simple and focused on the main audience. Use of extraneous information that could get in the way of public users discovering and using the websites should be limited. This results in a less cluttered and more usable website.⁶²

The less-is-more philosophy also encompasses webpage content. Complex websites that have interactive features or high graphic content may cause delays in loading pages or confuse the user and hence impede usage. Web designers should consider the least common denominator for platforms and networking available to the general public. Many websites note the preferred browser configuration (e.g., versions) and give links to find additional add-ins (e.g., PDF reader).

The less-is-more philosophy also addresses the complexity of the prescreening questionnaire. The goals of the prescreening process must be clear, and the questions selected should reflect those goals (e.g., to get clients to contact the office or to be a comprehensive first step in the application process). The design and layout of the questionnaires can be piloted to help make them simple, uncomplicated, and easy to use. Comprehensive questionnaires may be tedious or cumbersome to use for some of the public that the website is intended to serve.

- **Multiple language support.** Several of the websites provide support for English and Spanish. Texas provides a complete Spanish language version of the website (e.g., page content and forms, help, and page controls). The Pennsylvania website's language versions are table-driven. Currently, it supports Spanish and has a greeting in a total of 12 languages.⁶³ Application forms (e.g., PDF) in multiple languages are available.
- **Accessibility.** Some websites demonstrate support for the Section 508 Web accessibility standard⁶⁴ by displaying a "Bobby Approved" sticker (e.g., Kentucky and Pennsylvania). Pennsylvania tested its website using a screen reader and a group of disabled users.
- **User help and feedback.** Rolling out an application to the Internet introduces unique user support issues. Issues may be both technical and specific to the prescreening or application questionnaires and process.⁶⁵ Many websites provide user assistance via help pages, frequently asked questions (FAQs), online instructions or tutorials, and readily available links or phone numbers for obtaining user help. The risk of not providing a reasonably visible channel for help is that the user may abandon the use of the website or find another way to reach the State (e.g., through a webmaster or department head's e-mail address).⁶⁶
- **Orphaned pages.** By using search engines to access the website directly (e.g., from the bottom up), the occasional orphaned page is encountered. These are webpages that are not found easily by navigating from the department or program pages.⁶⁷ Web content designers and maintainers need to consider the many ways users can enter a website directly (e.g., Internet search engines) and organize forward/back links accordingly.

3 Selected Website Descriptions

The six State websites and one federal website featured in this section are samples of those offering interactive prescreening or online application tools, as noted in [Appendix A](#). These websites represent a diverse set of capabilities, features, interactive techniques, and technology. Information presented in this section summarizes the results of browsing these websites and having telephone conversations with website representatives.⁶⁸ [Section 2](#) consolidates the general characteristics and experiences obtained from those discussions.

3.1 State Websites

The following State-sponsored websites are described:

- [Florida](#)
- [Kentucky](#)
- [Michigan](#)
- [Pennsylvania](#)
- [Texas](#)
- [Washington](#)

<p>3.1.1 Florida</p>	<p>Florida's Children and Families Public Assistance Screening Survey</p>
	<p>http://www5.myflorida.com/cf_web/myflorida2/healthhuman/ess/Prof1.html</p> <p>Nathan Lewis Nathan_Lewis@dcf.state.fl.us 850-414-5927</p>
<p>History:</p> <p>This website was launched in April 2001, after approximately 3 months of in-house development by a small core team. Less than 400 labor hours were needed. Maintenance activity is on an as-needed basis, primarily keeping hyperlinks and website information up to date (e.g., phone numbers). Most changes are fielded in a day.</p>	
<p>Functional Summary:</p> <p>The survey anonymously screens for three programs—Temporary Cash Assistance, Medicaid, and Food Stamps—and focuses on fundamental children and family aspects. The survey is short with ten questions that characterize household financial and individual circumstances (e.g., income, age group, and pregnancy). Responses are selected from predetermined values using drop-down box selections or Yes/No radio buttons. A simple explanation for each question helps the user determine the appropriate response. Before submitting the information, the user is given an opportunity to review the answers and provide corrections.</p> <p>The result is a list of program links for which the user may be eligible. The explanation of the results is qualified (e.g., “It appears you MAY [or MAY NOT] be eligible...based on your answers to our survey”). Program descriptions provide a high-level description of the program, general eligibility conditions, and some FAQ items. Links to additional services not included in the survey results also are provided.</p> <p>A public assistance application is available as a PDF to download and must be completed manually and filed at a service center.</p>	
<p>Technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The website operates on an Apache web server, which runs on a Sun 4500 computer system. • The eligibility rule processing is client-based. JavaScript, downloaded with the results page, executes on the client to process the eligibility rules with user values contained in the URL search string. This removes processing from the server and reduces the need to store and manage data and rules on the server. It also helps reduce complexity and the need to involve data center staff in maintaining the survey tool. 	

3.1.1 Florida	Florida’s Children and Families Public Assistance Screening Survey
<p>Miscellaneous Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The survey is short and easy to use, requiring only a few moments to complete and get results. This allows the user to test eligibility spontaneously. • The thresholds are set to separate the clearly ineligible from the possibly eligible. The rules assume that everyone meets income disregards. This is intended to encourage the client to apply and gives the eligibility worker the opportunity to find other forms of aid if the client does not meet full financial requirements (e.g., ineligible for cash assistance but possibly eligible for food stamps). • Links are provided to additional information, such as FAQs, program information, and agency locations. A clickable map is provided to locate offices by county or district, as well as office address and contact information (e.g., phone number). • The public assistance application is available as a PDF in English and Spanish. Future plans include providing FAQs and general information in Spanish. 	
<p>Additional Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrades to the website are under consideration, such as providing the ability to fill in the application online; currently, applications must be printed and submitted to the office. Plans also include allowing the application (or changes to case status) to be submitted online. 	

3.1.2 Kentucky	KyCARES	
	http://www.kycares.net/ Larry Doyle larry.doyle@mail.state.ky.us or kentukycares.support@mail.state.ky.us 888-567-1373	Julie Franklin julie.franklin@mail.state.ky.us or kentukycares.support@mail.state.ky.us 888-567-1373
<p>History:</p> <p>Work on the website began in early 1998 and originated from a 1996 Governor-sponsored initiative designed to empower Kentucky citizens by leveraging technology and the Internet to deliver services to the public.</p> <p>Six organizations collaborated to define and provide funding (five cabinets and one agency). The website was developed with a contractor team. A prototype was available in July 1998, with a resource directory that could be searched and browsed available in July 1999. Functionality embodied in the current website was released in 2000, with public announcements made in an October-to-December 2000 timeframe. Maintenance updates, including additional features, are released periodically. The Governor’s Office of Technology administers the website.</p>		
<p>Functional Summary:</p> <p>The website serves as an online services and information directory, providing tools to identify, browse, and learn about services the Commonwealth or others provide. The website also allows for service providers to maintain their service descriptions and contact information online.</p> <p>The Guide to Services portion of the website allows users to choose from predefined categories of services (e.g., clothing, housing, food, and financial). Users then go through an interactive dialog, where they select from a list of statements that reflect their situation and the type of help required. A list of service providers is returned.</p> <p>The Service Screening portion of the website is a page with 12 questions. The user selects from a predefined set of choices for each question. A list of links to Kentucky-provided programs or services is returned.</p> <p>The Resource Directory portion of the website provides several ways to find providers. The user may enter a provider name or service keyword or browse by categories. An advanced search is available, with the capability to search parts of the provider or service descriptions. A list of service providers is returned.</p> <p>The Facilitated Guide portion of the website is new and under evaluation. It groups the needs into generalized service categories, allowing the user to choose across categories at one time.</p> <p>The Add or Edit Providers portion of the website allows users to look up a provider known to KyCARES and modify existing information or add a new record. Information on the provider includes descriptions of the organization, a contact name, and classification of the services provided.</p>		

3.1.2 Kentucky	KyCARES
<p>Technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KyCARES operates on a Compaq server running Microsoft Windows 2000 with Internet Information Services (5.0). • A Microsoft SQL Server 2000 is used to manage three databases—one for administrative functions (about 40 tables) and two databases to support the website (about 20 tables each). • Active Server Pages (ASPs) with JavaScript and Component Object Model (COM) components are used to implement application functionality with about 100 to 150 ASP pages. • A migration to Microsoft .NET and XML is under consideration. 	
<p>Miscellaneous Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The website provides a shopping basket metaphor; a user can manipulate a list of tip sheets or provider contacts in the My Folder area. These may be exported and saved. • For the eligibility survey tool, if a page has been inactive for 10 minutes, it will time out and redirect to the KyCARES home page. • As the user goes through the dialog, a panel with links to Tips changes to link relevant information (e.g., when the user chooses “if you have little money,” it references Thrift stores and donation centers). • To identify providers convenient to the user, the tools provide a location page that selects providers within a user-determined range based on ZIP Code, city, or county. • Statements on the screens incorporate previous user input; for example, if the user selects “you have little or no money,” the response is “since you have little or no money, let’s get you some help now.” • The forms for entering or updating provider information has a table of contents showing which forms are to be filled in and which are complete or available for editing. The user can skip to any available page and complete the forms in any order. • The website is Section 508-compliant and exhibits the “Bobby Approved” sticker. 	
<p>Additional Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The website is registered in several names to increase the likelihood that a user will find and remember it. Aliases include the .com, .gov, and .org top-level domains, as well as KyCARES and KentuckyCARES. Aliases redirect the user to the KyCARES.net domain name. • The website experienced more than 1 million hits in the first 2 months of this year, averaging 900 visits a day. The average visit since late 1999 is about 19 minutes. More than 50 percent of all visits are attributed to the general public. • Community providers maintain their provider information online. To keep administrative overhead to a minimum, the change process does not require online passwords, Personal Identification Numbers (PINs), or other access restrictions (provider personnel change frequently, and passwords or PINs get lost). Changes are submitted to the website administrators who contact the provider, verify information, and post the change on the website. 	

3.1.3 Michigan	Michigan Assistance and Referral Service (MARS)
	<p> http://www.state.mi.us/eAdvisor-Mars/ Julie Lewis lewisj4@michigan.gov 517-241-7084 </p>
<p>History:</p> <p>The website is a joint initiative of the Family Independence Agency and the Department of Community Health. The current release was developed between March and May 2002, becoming operational in late May. A previous version was developed between February 2001 and early 2002 and was piloted at several State locations. Lessons learned from the pilot were incorporated into the current website. Maintenance updates are made as needed.</p>	
<p>Functional Summary:</p> <p>This prescreening tool is accessed from the Family Services page. It allows a user to find programs offered by the State of Michigan that may help families in need with assistance for medical, nutritional, food, child care, temporary cash, or other expenses. Approximately 13 programs are checked.</p> <p>Screening is in two parts: nonfinancial and financial. Initial screens guide the user through questions about residency, family makeup, and other basic items. Explanatory information and hints are provided to the user to help answer the questions. A summary (preview) provides a preview of the questions and the answers entered by the user. Based on answers to the first set of nonfinancial questions, a list of links to helpful programs is provided.</p> <p>The user may continue the prescreening session by using an Income Estimator tool to check income against income limit requirements. Information on individual and household income and expenses is collected. Programs that meet income requirements are displayed.</p>	
<p>Technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prescreening tool is a standalone application hosted on the State-wide e-Michigan portal. The tool does not require a standalone database or integrate with other tools. • The tool is based on the Siebel eAdvisor product, running on a Microsoft Internet Information Server (IIS) web server with ASP. The user interface is table-driven, with about 300 tables used to populate seven to ten webpages. A typical desktop PC may be used to support development and testing. Rules also are table-driven. • To account for differences in specific eligibility values (e.g., location and program thresholds), thresholds for rules in the prescreening tool are adjusted nominally (e.g., poverty levels and averaging and adjusting shelter standards by a fixed percentage). 	

3.1.3 Michigan	Michigan Assistance and Referral Service (MARS)
<p>Miscellaneous Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The website provides explanations and tips for responses on a question-by-question basis. • As the mouse cursor is rolled over some entries in the income estimator tool, explanatory text appears to describe the entry. • A clickable county map assists with finding an office to apply for aid, which includes office locations, contacts, hours, and other descriptive information. 	
<p>Additional Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users also may apply online for the MICHild, Healthy Kids, and Healthy Kids for Pregnant Women programs. This capability was not reviewed. • Insight into actual use of the tool is limited; counters and other indicators, which give visibility into how the website is being used, are not yet implemented. • An upgrade to the website is being considered to refine the user interface, make it easier to maintain (e.g., add programs), and make it compatible with the existing State technical infrastructure (e.g., Oracle). • Other ways that the MARS tool can be accessed are through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michigan.gov portal - http://www.michigan.gov/emi/1,1303,7-102-112-34098-219_124_495--,00.html • Family Independence Agency web page - http://www.michigan.gov/fia/0,1607,7-124--37380--,00.html • Department of Community Health web page - http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-2942_4911_21428-37520--,00.html 	

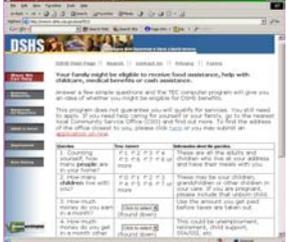
<p>3.1.4 Pennsylvania</p>	<p>Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Application for Social Services (COMPASS)</p>
	<p>http://www.compass.state.pa.us/</p> <p>Dennis Brown dennbrown@state.pa.us 717-772-7845</p>
<p>History:</p> <p>Initial development began in September 2000, was piloted from August to October of 2001 with service providers, and became operational in mid-October 2001. The first release provided applications for health care and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). A Spanish version was implemented in November 2001, and all subsequent releases have been bilingual. The April 2002 release added a preeligibility screening tool. Releases in April 2002 and February 2003 expanded screening coverage and added other benefit program applications. The June 2003 release will add additional programs and increase the number of interfaces to program (e.g., back-end) systems. This release also will include a power-user version of the user interface and additional interactive features for community partners.</p>	
<p>Functional Summary:</p> <p>The COMPASS website provides a self-screening and online application service for benefit programs. The screening questionnaire allows a user to prescreen anonymously for eligibility to one or more listed programs. Enrolled Medicaid providers and community-based organizations also may use the questionnaire. Information about the household, individuals, their income and resources, expenses, benefits received, and other data is collected through multiple screens. At completion, a preliminary (presumptive) eligibility determination is made, providing a list of programs, possible (maximum) benefit amounts, and eligible individuals. Links to noneligible programs also are provided. The user may proceed with an online application or follow links to additional information.</p> <p>The online application allows information entered in the screening questionnaire to be copied into the application, if prescreening is performed. More than a dozen program’s applications are currently supported or planned in the near term. The application is expected to take about 20 to 45 minutes to complete. An application number is assigned, and the user goes through one or more interactive sessions to complete the application. The application process collects information on the individuals, household, employment, expenses, medical, insurance, resources, and other data. Condensed summaries of entered data are presented periodically to allow for user review and changes.</p> <p>When the user selects the Submit button, an index entry is created in the eligibility system. Counties review their applications daily, filtering out nonviable ones. If reasonable, the data is brought into the application processing area and preregisters an application. Eligibility workers then follow up as needed to complete missing information and perform verifications. The applicant must print (or request a mailed copy), sign, and return an application signature page. The next business day following user submission of the online application is used as the application’s actual submittal date.</p>	

3.1.4 Pennsylvania	Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Application for Social Services (COMPASS)
<p>Technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The website operates on a Unisys ES7000 with four central processing units (CPUs) at 733 megahertz (MHz) with 4 gigabytes (GB) of memory, a Windows 2000 Data Center, Microsoft IIS web server, and Oracle 8.17 database. • The software application structure is based on the Microsoft Distributed interNet Architecture (DNA) model. User data is validated using JavaScript on the client and Visual Basic's VBScript on the server (e.g., ASP). Business logic is implemented as Visual Basic 6.0 COM objects. Distributed COM (DCOM) is the underlying integration technology. Client sessions are encrypted with SSL 128-bit session keys. • Currently, COMPASS interfaces in real time with the Commonwealth's Client Information System (CIS) on substance abuse, the Health & Community Services Information Systems (HCSIS) on mental retardation, and the CAPS. Ultimately, COMPASS also may interface with 12 to 15 back-end systems. The Unisys Transaction Integrator OpenTI is used to connect to the Unisys 2200 mainframes. Interfaces are at the application level, not directly to databases. The COMPASS database is not accessible outside the COMPASS system. • Data exchanged between the systems is based on XML. A common COMPASS schema is defined. Each system has its own unique XML document format based on its specific needs, using Extensible Stylesheet Language Transformations (XSLT) to translate between formats. • The website currently consists of approximately 164 webpages and 127,000 lines of code or script. It can support about 75 concurrent users. • Key tools used to develop the website are Microsoft Visual Studio; FrontPage for webpages; and Mercury Interactive's LoadRunner and WinRunner for performance, stress, and automated scenario testing. • Bilingual text (i.e., English and Spanish) is stored in the Oracle database and selected and rendered based on the preferred user language. 	
<p>Miscellaneous Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data entered into the prescreening questionnaire is copied into the application. • A webpage for the novice is provided, describing typical web controls and conventions. • The website was evaluated against the Section 508 standard using "Bobby Worldwide." It was tested by a group of expert disabled users to determine ease of use. Content undergoes a literacy review to ensure understanding and ease of use. • The left part of the screen is used to present status of the application process. The Forward/Back browser buttons are controlled by the software application. • The applicant is provided with maps and directions from the applicant's home to the appropriate office. • The user has the ability to suspend and resume sessions. A computer-generated application number and user-chosen password or secret hint controls access. Applications must be completed within 30 days. Three attempts are allowed to log back in, after which a new application must be created. • COMPASS has two Worker View modules for county assistance workers and community partners to access information submitted to COMPASS by applicants. All worker view users are restricted from seeing applicant information until submitted by the user. 	

3.1.4 Pennsylvania	Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Application for Social Services (COMPASS)
<p>Additional Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMPASS is intended to evolve to become a self-service portal covering the entire enrollment period. • The first (pilot) release was on the public Internet but was not publicized outside a select group of medical providers, hospitals, and others that would pilot the tool. Once the pilot was completed, the website was announced formally. Publishing on the Internet did not complicate the piloting because no more than a handful of applications outside the pilot group were received. • Statewide, about 92,000 applications are submitted monthly. Currently, a total of 16,296 applications were submitted through the Web—10,573 for Medicaid, 652 for CHIP assistance, 2,685 for adult basic assistance, 3,696 for cash assistance, and 6,246 for food stamps. For the prescreening questionnaire, about 38,655 were initiated through the COMPASS website, with 24,238 completed (14,417 were abandoned). Of the completed questionnaires, about 20,004 were potentially eligible. In general, about 300 applications per week are submitted through the website. • The website can perform an online verification of whether the applicant is currently receiving Medicaid and whether a community partner—applying on behalf of an individual—is enrolled as a Medicaid provider. • The workflow between the COMPASS system and the back-end eligibility system is designed to have minimum impact on the way the eligibility or case workers usually operate. Clerical staff may import the data into the system and print out an application in the usual form. County supervisors undergo an orientation and receive some materials describing the system, and they in turn provide orientation to their staff, usually in the context of a meeting. • A survey is available for users to comment on the website. Responses are very positive. 	

<p>3.1.5 Texas</p>	<p>State of Texas Assistance and Referral System (STARS)</p>
	<p>http://www.txstars.net/</p> <p>Juanita Bullock TIERS Communications Director juanita.bullock@dhs.state.tx.us 512-490-0558</p>
<p>History:</p> <p>STARS was piloted on an intranet in February 2001, where it was available for staff and clients to use in agency offices. It was released to the Internet in July 2001. Monthly releases were made during the first 5 months based on client and staff feedback, URL updates, and policy and income rule changes. Releases are now made on a quarterly basis.</p>	
<p>Functional Summary:</p> <p>STARS allows individuals to self-screen for potential eligibility for about 50 programs provided by the Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) and other Texas State Agencies (a complete list of programs is available on the website). Users of the website are completely anonymous; the website server does not keep user input once the web session is terminated.</p> <p>The information collection process (e.g., knowledgeable user mode) is broken down into four basic data collection steps, taking a few minutes to input answers for each step:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General information. This basic information includes the role of the person filling in the survey (e.g., self or third party), the location from which STARS is accessed, residency, family unit size, housing expenses, and whether help is needed in other areas (e.g., alcohol/drug issues, child support, and jobs). • Household information. This information characterizes the family unit individual's age, citizenship, and other characteristics. • Financial, benefit, and medical information. This information characterizes the financial resources, benefits received, and medical information. • Relationship information. Information about the family relationships between individuals in the family unit is captured in a table. <p>A session with STARS results in a list of programs showing the administering agency, family members that may be eligible, a brief discussion of the service provided, and links to further contacts about the program. Notice is provided that the results are not final and that applicants must apply at a local office.</p> <p>Application forms for a service and links to Area Information Centers are provided. The applicant must submit the application in person at a local agency office.</p>	

3.1.5 Texas	State of Texas Assistance and Referral System (STARS)
<p>Technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The software application is written in Java and initially hosted on Windows NT, a WebSphere web server, with Dell quad computer servers. The software application later was ported to Sun UNIX. • STARS uses a project-developed rules engine with about 80 decision tables needed to implement the STARS eligibility rules. The business rules incorporated into STARS are a subset of the overall eligibility rules (about 3,000 tables are being incorporated into the overall Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System [TIERS] project; see Additional Information in Appendix A). Business rules and eligibility decisions are defined conservatively to err on the side of screening someone into a program and to encourage those that need help to continue with the application process. 	
<p>Miscellaneous Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users start a screening session by indicating whether they are familiar with computer use (or are using technology to assist disabled users). The novice mode provides a tutorial (in English and Spanish) that introduces the eligibility survey and explains how to manipulate the controls (e.g., the spacebar may be used to progress through screens, and users may practice with webpage interactive controls). A set of screens with text arranged for the novice user provides guidance through the session. Periodically, the data collected at each step is summarized, and the user may revise answers. Screens for the computer-knowledgeable users are more compact (e.g., tabular format), with more information collected per screen. • Spanish is supported, either as separate pages or combined with English text on shared pages (e.g., the tutorial). Spanish language support includes labels for controls, help information, and dialog boxes. • The website has a timeout counter that will cancel the session after about 5 minutes of inactivity, prompting the user with a popup about 1 minute before the counter expires. • The interactive forms have logic that adjusts prompts based on previous user input. For example, STARS allows for items to be selected only if they make sense based on previous answers, such as only those children under the age of 3 being at risk of developmental disability. • A short survey is provided at the end, which a user may wish to complete. 	
<p>Additional Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STARS is part of TIERS, a broader modernization project; information is available online at http://www.dhs.state.tx.us/programs/TIERS/. • TANF State-wide statistics may be found on pages 44–53 of the “2003 Reference Guide” at http://www.bms.dhs.state.tx.us/reference_guide.htm. • By prototyping the rules engine with STARS, its execution could be evaluated and its operation refined based on real usage, reducing scale-up risks to support TIERS. • More than 133,000 uses of the website occurred up to the beginning of this year, with approximately 15,000 in January alone. 	

3.1.6 Washington	Trial Eligibility Calculator (TEC) Online Community Services Office and Application for Services
	http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/TEC/ https://wvs2.wa.gov/dshs/onlineapp/introduction_1.asp Scott Reese reesesa@dshs.wa.gov 360-664-4409
<p>History:</p> <p>The Online Community Services Office provides a single point of access to all services offered by the Washington Department of Social and Health Services. The TEC and Application for Services capabilities were defined and built by separate regional and department organization projects. The Application for Services portion was piloted with hospital and other outreach partners based on geographic regions. Both the TEC and Application for Services were released for State-wide operation between late 1999 and early 2000. Three major releases have occurred for the Application for Services: the first provided initial rollout of the application (about a 6-month development period), the second included change of circumstances and children’s medical information (about a 5-month development period), and the third included eligibility review. Maintenance changes are made as needed.</p>	
<p>Functional Summary:</p> <p>Two separate capabilities are provided: the TEC and the Online Application for Services, allowing the user to prescreen and apply for services using the Web.</p> <p>The TEC is a standalone tool. It asks six questions and provides radio buttons or drop-down boxes to choose an appropriate answer. A user-oriented explanation is associated with each question. The calculator returns a consolidated list of responses, a list of links to likely benefit programs, and a statement of potential eligibility for each program. Brief comments also are provided, such as the reason for a denial or additional insight into the benefits. Pages describing the programs provide additional statements for eligibility requirements.</p> <p>The Online Application for Services allows users to apply for new services, report a change in circumstances for benefit programs in which they are currently enrolled (e.g., change of address), and initiate a review of eligibility status and describe the changes. The application process is comprehensive and broken into two main application steps, along with collecting child care and other information. The first part of the application may be submitted before the others are completed, allowing for basic food benefits to begin early. Detailed information is collected on the household and individual circumstances, such as resources, medical, income, employment, and expenses.</p> <p>Once submitted, a link to the completed application is e-mailed to the appropriate worker as a notification of the submission. A workers may log into the administrative part of the web server and access the submitted application. The worker then may print the application for the case record, and the processing continues as with the manual process. The date on which the user submits the online application is used as the program’s submission date for time requirements.</p>	

3.1.6 Washington	Trial Eligibility Calculator (TEC) Online Community Services Office and Application for Services
<p>Technology:</p> <p>Online Application for Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One IBM Netfinity Server supports the database (with two 700 MHz processors and 1.5 GB of Random Access Memory [RAM]), and another supports the Web server (with two 860 MHz processors and 640 megabytes [MB] of RAM). Servers run Windows 2000 Advanced Server, IIS as the web server, and SQL Server for the database. • Software on the server uses ASPs written in VBScript. There are approximately 485 ASP files and 83 server side include files that dynamically build about 50 webpages. There are about 24,218 lines of code. Content and navigation is controlled by how the user answers the questions, as well as how the user navigates through the interactive application. The base application needs approximately 5 MB of storage (not including the database). • The Online Application for Services uses e-mail for asynchronous coupling of the front-end application data collection process to workers. The e-mail does not include application data, but rather links to the completed application. There is minimum impact to the eligibility process. • No one (except for computer operations administrators) can access the database online. Workers only gain access to applications after they are submitted. Workers may go to an administrative page and view all the applications for their office or any other office. <p>TEC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The server is the same as that used for the Online Application for Services and runs Windows 2000 and IIS. • The TEC consists of two ASP pages (input and results) with a supporting external JavaScript file. There is no database or connection to the eligibility system. All values are hard coded within the pages. There are approximately 1,000 lines of code. 	
<p>Miscellaneous Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress of the online application process is provided at the top of the page and shows the major steps completed and those remaining. This progress information is saved in the database on the server as the user navigates screens. • A rest stop is shown at the end of each major step in the application process. The user can save the application in progress and later retrieve it based on a user-provided username and eight-character password. There is no time limit on when the application must be completed. • Lists of additional forms to be completed and brought to the interview are available. Some forms may be filled out online; others must be printed and completed manually. 	

3.1.6 Washington	Trial Eligibility Calculator (TEC) Online Community Services Office and Application for Services
<p>Additional Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington provides other interactive prescreening websites that may be of interest. The Washington State entry in Appendix A lists these websites. • When the Online Application for Services was piloted on the Internet, access was restricted by ZIP Code, which had to be entered from the main page. Only applications within the pilot area ZIP Code(s) were allowed. Those outside received messages directing them to other channels. • The TEC averages around 4,000 visitor sessions per month. The Results page gets about 5,000 hits, which implies that about one in four performs multiple calculations. • In February, about 1,600 new applications, 210 eligibility reviews, and 241 change reports were submitted via the website. • TANF caseloads are approximately 55,000, with about 72,000 receiving Working Connections child care and 183,000 receiving basic food assistance. Historical information is available at http://www.wa.gov/dshs/esa/briefingbook.htm. • Upgrade and reengineering of the existing Online Application for Services capability is under consideration as the existing Automated Client Eligibility System is enhanced. 	

3.2 Federal Website

The GovBenefits.gov website, a federally sponsored website, also was included in the review and is described in this section.

3.2.1 GovBenefits	GovBenefits.gov
	<p>http://www.govbenefits.gov/</p> <p>Denis Gusty gusty-denis@dol.gov</p>
<p>History:</p> <p>This Federal Government benefits portal is one of the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB’s) 25 e-government initiatives. It is a partnership of 10 agencies and organizations; the Department of Labor is the project’s managing partner. The goal is to provide personalized access to government assistance programs. The website began operating on April 29, 2002, just 96 days after the project began, and initially screened for 55 federal benefit programs. Monthly updates added programs during the past year; currently, 417 benefit programs are included.</p>	
<p>Functional Summary:</p> <p>The website allows a user to prescreen and obtain information on federally sponsored programs anonymously. Users select from a list of categories that reflect their personal situations (e.g., I am a... Child, Dependent, Veteran). The user then may proceed to answer questions applicable to the selected categories or generate a list of programs associated with all chosen categories.</p> <p>The questions are broken into two main tiers at this time. The first tier collects detailed information based on all selected categories. The second tier of selected questions is based on answers to the first tier, which gathers more program-specific information.</p> <p>The tool returns a list of benefits reports, which may be browsed individually. In addition, a consolidated page of user-selected summaries may be generated. A benefits report includes the name of the program, a short description, managing agency links, program contact information, and web resources. If the program is administered or supervised by individual States, notes are included to refer the user to the appropriate State.</p>	
<p>Technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The website is hosted through FirstGov on a website-dedicated system. It is implemented using Java 2 Platform Enterprise Edition (J2EE) with Java Server Pages (JSPs) and uses an Apache web server with an Oracle DBMS. • A project-developed rules engine is used for the website. Individuals within the participating agencies and programs fill out benefit worksheets to specify benefits information. Developers use these templates to populate the rules, questions, and benefits report information. Each implementation is reviewed with experts from the responsible agency or program as part of the development process. 	

3.2.1 GovBenefits	GovBenefits.gov
<p>Miscellaneous Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions primarily present predefined response selections using radio buttons (e.g., Yes, No, or No answer) or drop-down boxes. A few questions require user value inputs (e.g., income). Default values help reduce user input. • The user has multiple ways to identify programs. These are intended to accommodate different levels of user familiarity with the programs and the amount of time a user is willing to spend on identifying applicable programs. The three methods are text search, personalized questionnaire, and category-based listings. • The website is Section 508-compliant, building on insight from the Social Security Administration. 	
<p>Additional Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This website is part of the OMB e-government initiative under the Government-to-Citizen (G2C) portfolio; see http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/egov/. • The website is receiving medium to heavy use. More than 3 million visits were logged since its release, and current use is about 400,000 to 500,000 visits per month. WebTrends (a website reporting software) is used to collect metrics, such as the most frequently visited benefits pages. • The website synthesizes information across a large and diverse set of agencies and programs. A stakeholder team helps manage stakeholder participation and agreements. One key to success is establishing the shared vision, objectives, and goals. Each partnering organization provides a high-level contact. • Because many federally sponsored programs are State or county administered and supervised, the website currently helps users identify these programs by noting locations where federal websites link to State websites, such as the Office of Family Assistance at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/. The vision is to take the portal to the State level, directly pointing to other State eligibility tools or program-specific websites. Plans include providing an online application that lets the citizen enter information once to be used by many different agencies. • The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance was used initially to identify candidate benefits programs; see http://www.cfd.gov/. Because this is a large set of candidate programs, only those fitting the Government-to-Citizen focus are considered. A program is included if it offers benefits to individuals as opposed to other entities (e.g., incorporated businesses). • The questions and their presentation are undergoing revision to simplify the user interface. Future releases will reduce the questions per page (e.g., 24) and group questions into logical tiers (e.g., 20 questions per screen). • A portion of the screen is set aside to feature announcements from partners. This helps partners use the website as a way to advertise partner capabilities. 	

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APPENDIX A. LIST OF REVIEWED WEBSITES

This appendix catalogs websites identified as a part of the study. This list is intended to provide a reference into the diverse set of approaches and techniques taken by States and other government entities. These websites were located by browsing each State's department of human or social services webpages. The list primarily references websites offering TANF-related, publicly accessible interactive prescreening or online application tools and information. This list includes federal and local government websites, as well as some other program-specific pages that may be of interest. Federal websites are listed by website name.

The letter **(I)** denotes websites offering a level of interactive aid (e.g., service or provider locator, prescreening, online application, or other automated features to help someone find, understand, or apply for aid). The symbol **(*)** denotes websites selected for additional review and described in [Section 3](#). Hyperlinks in the Links column provide shortcuts to some of the pages within the websites.

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
Alabama	The Alabama Department of Human Resources provides a summary of technical and financial eligibility requirements to enroll in the Family Assistance Program.	http://www.dhr.state.al.us/fad/faer.htm
Alaska (I)	An interactive food stamp eligibility calculator is available from the main page of the Alaska Division of Public Assistance. Selecting the assistance in the left navigation panel provides information on the programs. This includes a discussion of eligibility requirements and benefits.	http://health.hss.state.ak.us/dpa/
Arizona (I)	<p>The Arizona Department of Economic Security's Family Assistance Administration provides downloadable applications for cash assistance, food stamps, and medical benefits provided by the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). Text describing the eligibility rules for the programs appears across several webpages.</p> <p>A service locator tool is available.</p>	<p>http://www.de.state.az.us/faa/</p> <p>http://www.de.state.az.us/tp/portalui.asp</p>
Arkansas	<p>The Arkansas Department of Human Services website lists the services provided.</p> <p>Some eligibility requirements can be found from documents under the policies link, these do appear to be intended for general public use.</p>	<p>http://www.state.ar.us/dhs/homepage.html</p> <p>http://www.accessarkansas.org/dhs/webpolicy/Index.htm</p>
California	<p>The California Department of Social Services home page describes the overall California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Welfare-To-Work program. Users are directed to local county welfare departments listed in the County Government section of the local telephone book.</p> <p>As a county example, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services provides pages describing the basic eligibility requirements available from the county CalWORKs home page.</p>	<p>http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/Welfare-to_172.htm</p> <p>http://www.ladpss.org/dpss/calworks/default.cfm</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
Colorado (I)	<p>The Colorado Department of Human Services provides some text describing the Colorado Works program.</p> <p>An application is available as part of a Web-based training section, including guidelines for the interview, verification, and other items.</p> <p>The Colorado Division of Aging and Adult Services page links to an interactive benefits checkup for older Americans. The National Council on the Aging provides this service to help older Americans identify State and federal assistance programs available from their State.</p>	<p>http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/</p> <p>http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/oss/CWP/Training/Default.htm</p> <p>http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/oss/aas/index1.html</p> <p>http://beta.benefitscheckup.org/bcu/index.cfm?CSO_ID=47&SAT_OFF_ID=0</p>
Connecticut	<p>The Connecticut Department of Social Services Jobs First program has general information about the TANF program. Applications for some services are available.</p>	<p>http://www.dss.state.ct.us/</p>
Delaware	<p>The Delaware Division of Social Services provides general information about the TANF program, including some eligibility information.</p>	<p>http://www.state.de.us/dhss/dss/dsshome.html</p> <p>http://www.state.de.us/dhss/dss/welfaretowork.html</p>
District of Columbia	<p>The District of Columbia Department of Human Services provides general information on the TANF welfare reform programs. The <i>Answers Please!</i> link provides e-mail and phone numbers that help users apply for social services.</p> <p>An online Citizen Service Request Form is available, allowing citizens to request a municipal service online, directly from District Agencies. Users submitting a request should receive an e-mail, including a service request tracking number, within 48 hours.</p> <p>The DHS News link on the home page references GovBenefits.gov</p>	<p>http://dhs.dc.gov/main.shtm</p> <p>http://www.dc.gov/citizen/request.htm</p> <p>(see the GovBenefits summary)</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
Florida (I*)	<p>The Florida Department of Children and Families provides an interactive screening survey that gathers essential data on the user's situation to identify the appropriate programs.</p> <p>Some document-based Welfare-to-Work screening tools also may be found on the Agency for Workforce Innovation page.</p>	<p>http://www5.myflorida.com/cf_web/myflorida2/healthhuman/ess/Prof1.html</p> <p>http://www.floridajobs.org/pdg/wtw/</p>
Georgia	<p>The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services is responsible for welfare and employment support, child protection, foster care, and other services to strengthen families.</p> <p>General information on the programs also is available.</p>	<p>http://www.dhr.georgia.gov/</p> <p>http://www2.state.ga.us/departments/dhr/dfcs/index.html</p>
GovBenefits (I*) (Federal)	<p>This Federal Government benefits portal is an Office of Management and Budget e-government initiative. The Department of Labor is the project's managing partner.</p> <p>Through one web address, it consolidates public access to Federal benefits programs across multiple agencies. Users answer general questions, and the tool points them to a list of benefits programs that are likely to meet their needs.</p>	<p>http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/egov/</p> <p>http://www.govbenefits.gov/</p>
Hawaii	<p>The Hawaii Department of Human Services home page has some information describing the program requirements such as financial and food stamp benefits.</p>	<p>http://www.state.hi.us/dhs/</p> <p>http://www.state.hi.us/dhs/FinancialAssistance.html</p>
Iowa	<p>The Iowa Division of Economic Assistance page provides summaries of the programs and refers users to a local Department of Human Services office for applications and help. Users also may use the contact information provided on the page.</p>	<p>http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/EconomicAssistance/EconomicAssistance.asp</p>
Idaho	<p>The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Division of Welfare website provides a downloadable application for assistance. Location and contact information for the regional offices is also available.</p>	<p>http://www2.state.id.us/dhw/</p> <p>http://www2.state.id.us/dhw/welfare/application_for_assistance.htm</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
Illinois (I)	<p>The Illinois Department of Human Services provides a service locator tool that allows the user to select the recipient of the service and choose from a list of available services.</p> <p>A short description of the service a requirements a contact information.</p>	<p>http://www.dhs.state.il.us/services/</p> <p>http://www.dhs.state.il.us/ts/fss/tanf.asp</p>
Indiana	<p>Within the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, the Division of Family and Children/Bureau of Family Resources provides pages describing the TANF program.</p> <p>Forms are available.</p>	<p>http://www.in.gov/fssa/</p> <p>http://www.in.gov/fssa/families/tanf/index.html</p> <p>http://www.in.gov/fssa/forms/dfcforms.html</p>
Kansas	<p>The Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services provides a service index that may be used to find a description of basic TANF eligibility requirements.</p> <p>Downloadable forms are available.</p>	<p>http://www.srskansas.org/</p> <p>http://www.srskansas.org/services.htm</p> <p>http://www.srskansas.org/ees/taf-ga.htm</p>
Kentucky (I*)	<p>The Commonwealth of Kentucky KyCARES website is an online services and information directory and guide for finding federal, State, and community providers. It provides several tools to help find services. One tool is a service-screening questionnaire, which evaluates and returns a list of links to programs that may be of assistance.</p> <p>Information on eligibility is available on the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (K-TAP) website.</p>	<p>http://cfc.state.ky.us/</p> <p>http://www.kycares.net/</p> <p>http://cfc.state.ky.us/help/AboutKTAP_2.asp</p>
Louisiana	<p>The Louisiana Department of Social Services Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP) page lists the general eligibility factors and grant amounts. An application for assistance and instructions are available.</p>	<p>http://www.dss.state.la.us/</p> <p>http://www.dss.state.la.us/offofs/html/family_independence_temporary_.html</p>
Maine	<p>Information on the TANF program is available through the Maine Bureau of Family Independence webpages. General background and conditions for the program are provided. The online Public Assistance Manual describes eligibility requirements, but this does not appear to be intended for general public use.</p>	<p>http://www.state.me.us/dhs/bfi/TANF.htm</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
Maryland (I)	<p>The Maryland Department of Human Resources provides an eligibility calculator, <i>Am I Eligible</i>, which leads the user through a small set of questions and returns links to possibly eligible programs.</p> <p>Program pages contain descriptions of the benefits, eligibility requirements, information on how and where to apply, links to an online application form, and a list of what to bring when applying.</p>	<p>http://www.dhr.state.md.us/</p> <p>http://www.dhr.state.md.us/how/aie/</p> <p>http://www.dhr.state.md.us/how/cashfood/tca.htm</p>
Massachusetts (I)	<p>The Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services provides several methods of public online access.</p> <p>An Eligibility Wizard allows users to determine potential eligibility for programs offered by State and community-based organizations. In a question-and-answer format, the Wizard walks the user through eligibility rule sets for multiple programs at one time, without duplication. The tool currently is completing testing and is not available.</p> <p>The MassCARES Resource Locator offers several ways to find local or State-wide service providers. Users may search by keyword or provider name. A guided search using a taxonomy also is available.</p> <p>The Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services provides an online screening tool for child care services.</p>	<p>http://www.masscares.org/</p> <p>http://www.masscares.org/main.asp?page=masscares</p> <p>http://www.qualitychildcare.org/childcare_qualifying1.asp</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
<p>Michigan (I*)</p>	<p>The Michigan Assistance and Referral Service (MARS) is a prescreening application accessed from the Family Services page.</p> <p>It allows users to find programs offered by the State of Michigan that may help families in need with assistance for medical, nutritional, food, child care, temporary cash, or other expenses. It has dynamic prompts based on answers to FAQs, as well as other interactive features. It provides links to information about programs that may help.</p> <p>MARS can also be access through the Michigan.gov portal, the Family Independence Agency webpage, and the Department of Community Health web page.</p> <p>Applications may be submitted online for the MICHild, Healthy Kids, and Healthy Kids for Pregnant Women programs.</p>	<p>http://www.state.mi.us/eAdvisor-Mars/</p> <p>http://www.michigan.gov/emi/1,1303,7-102-112-34098-219_124_495-,00.html</p> <p>http://www.michigan.gov/fia/0,1607,7-124--37380--,00.html</p> <p>http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-2942_4911_21428-37520--,00.html</p> <p>https://eform.state.mi.us/michild/intro1.htm</p>
<p>Minnesota</p>	<p>Minnesota Department of Human Services supervises a variety of county administered economic assistance programs (economic and community support programs).</p> <p>Program descriptions are available from the “How Do I/We...” link to the DHS InfoCenter page. The InfoCenter provides inks to local (county government) websites.</p> <p>Program information pages provide an overview of requirements, benefits and other information (e.g., the Minnesota Family Investment Program).</p> <p>Applications are available.</p>	<p>http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/</p> <p>http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/infocenter/how_do.htm</p> <p>http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/ecs/program/default.htm</p> <p>http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/ecs/program/mfipminn.htm</p> <p>http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
Mississippi	<p>The Mississippi DHS Division of Economic Assistance provides information on its programs.</p> <p>Program pages describe requirements, eligibility guidelines, and benefits, as well as offering other program-specific information.</p> <p>Applications are available for TANF and health benefits, health benefits only, and food stamps.</p>	<p>http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us</p> <p>http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/ea.html</p> <p>http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/ea_tanf.html</p> <p>http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/ea_application.html</p>
Missouri	<p>The Missouri Department of Social Services, Division of Family Services provides several pages describing the Income Maintenance & Self-Sufficiency programs and services (e.g., temporary assistance). Pages describe the program, eligibility, and major provisions.</p>	<p>http://www.dss.state.mo.us/</p> <p>http://www.dss.state.mo.us/dfs/tempa.htm</p>
Montana	<p>The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services provides descriptions of the programs available. These descriptions characterize program, requirements, and financial and nonfinancial criteria.</p> <p>An application for public assistance is available through the Virtual Human Services Pavilion.</p>	<p>http://www.dphhs.state.mt.us/</p> <p>http://vhsp.dphhs.state.mt.us/</p> <p>http://vhsp.dphhs.state.mt.us/dph_11.htm</p>
Nebraska (I)	<p>The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services System provides an index of programs and services to find appropriate program-specific pages.</p> <p>Program pages describe general benefits and requirements. Applications are available.</p> <p>Additionally, the searchable Nebraska Resource and Referral System Database can be accessed to find community agencies and organizations providing services.</p>	<p>http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/</p> <p>http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/sysprog.htm</p> <p>http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/fia/adc.htm</p> <p>http://nncf.unl.edu/nrrs/index.html</p>
Nevada	<p>The Nevada Department of Human Resources Welfare Division webpages provide facts and information.</p> <p>These include program eligibility requirements and benefits (e.g., payment allowances and other facts for TANF).</p>	<p>http://welfare.state.nv.us/welfare.htm</p> <p>http://welfare.state.nv.us/elig_pay.htm</p> <p>http://welfare.state.nv.us/elig_pay/tanf_home.htm</p> <p>http://welfare.state.nv.us/elig_pay/tanf_facts.htm</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
New Hampshire	<p>New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services Division of Family Assistance provides a set of webpages for each program.</p> <p>These pages contain overall descriptions, contact information (including email) general and financial eligibility requirements (e.g., fact sheet) verification documentation FAQs, and other information.</p> <p>The Family Assistance Manual and other manuals are available online.</p>	<p>http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/DHHS_SITE/default.htm</p> <p>http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/DFA/default.htm</p> <p>http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/TANF/default.htm</p> <p>http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/DFA/LIBRARY/default.htm</p>
New Jersey	<p>The New Jersey Department of Human Services Division of Family Development oversees and directs the State welfare reform (Work First NJ) and other programs. These are administered by the county welfare agencies.</p> <p>General descriptions of the program, eligibility requirements, and benefits are available by browsing the table of links in the Work First information pages. County location and contact information is provided, as well as a consolidated list of key contacts. A form for contacting the division is provided.</p>	<p>http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/</p> <p>http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/index.html</p> <p>http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/wfnjws.html</p>
New Mexico	<p>The New Mexico Human Services Department's Income Support Division page provides a link to a PDF describing the NMWorks program.</p> <p>Descriptions include general eligibility requirements. A downloadable application is available.</p>	<p>http://www.state.nm.us/hsd/</p> <p>http://www.state.nm.us/hsd/isd.html</p> <p>http://www.state.nm.us/hsd/pdf/tempcash.pdf</p>
New York (I)	<p>The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance provides webpages describing the assistance programs and general eligibility requirements.</p> <p>The e-bizNYS website helps enable businesses and individuals to conduct business with State entities. Various online transactions, forms, and guides are available.</p> <p>A Citizen Services Guide website helps individuals locate State services and access some of those services online.</p>	<p>http://www.otda.state.ny.us/otda/ta/default.htm</p> <p>http://www.nysegov.com/e-bizNYS.cfm</p> <p>http://www.nysegov.com/citguide.cfm?displaymode=normal&fontsize=100&contrast=lod&superCat=82&cat=421&content=main</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
North Carolina	<p>The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services Work First webpages describe the economic independence services. A table lists eligibility requirements, the proof needed, and how often the requirement is tested.</p> <p>Many forms are available. Some allow filling the form in, printing and then sending the printed copies to the appropriate entity.</p> <p>The NC FAST (Families Accessing Services through Technology) program is also underway designed to improve the way the NC Department of Health and Human Services and Departments of Social Services provide services to families and manage programs</p>	<p>http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/ http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/ http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/ei/ei_hm.htm</p> <p>http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/</p> <p>http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/ncfast/</p>
North Dakota	<p>The North Dakota Department of Human Services provides webpages describing the TANF program. Pages accessed from the FAQ link describe general program requirements and eligibility. Users may click on a map may to obtain contact information for county social services offices, where users they can apply.</p>	<p>http://notes.state.nd.us/dhs/dhsweb.nsf</p>
Ohio	<p>The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' website lists services offered by the Ohio Works First program for the Ohio workforce.</p> <p>A fact sheet describes the program, including general eligibility and other aspects. Some forms are available through the website's Info Center link. Applications and eligibility determinations for the Ohio Works First program are done at the county agency.</p>	<p>http://www.state.oh.us/odjfs/ http://www.state.oh.us/odjfs/0000OurServices.stm http://www.state.oh.us/odjfs/factsheets/OWF.pdf</p>
Oklahoma	<p>Oklahoma Department of Human Services Family Support Services Division provides a webpage describing the programs. Links are available to email the division, and access a map for county office contact and location information.</p>	<p>http://www.okdhs.org/fssd/ http://www.okdhs.org/fssd/ProgramInformation.htm - Temporary</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
Oregon (I)	<p>The Children, Adults and Families group of the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) administers the TANF program. Services are provided through offices across the State, which are operated by the DHS Community HS group.</p> <p>A services information checklist is available. Information on eligibility may be found by browsing the family services manuals, but this does not appear to be intended for general public use. Screening is done at the self-sufficiency office.</p> <p>The Oregon Helps benefit calculator (Multnomah County) screens for eligibility in 12 programs by collecting information on the household, including earnings and housing. This returns a list of programs and likelihood of eligibility. English, Spanish, Russian, and Vietnamese language versions are available.</p>	<p>http://www.dhs.state.or.us/</p> <p>http://www.dhs.state.or.us/caf/index.htm</p> <p>http://www.dhs.state.or.us/assistance/cash/tanf/tanf.htm</p> <p>http://www.dhs.state.or.us/caf/data/dhschecklist.htm</p> <p>http://www.oregonhelps.org/</p>
Pennsylvania (I*)	<p>Pennsylvania's Department of Public Welfare maintains the COMPASS website. It includes an interactive eligibility screening tool and an online application for services.</p>	<p>http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/</p> <p>https://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/COMPASS/PGM/ASP/SC001.asp</p>
Rhode Island	<p>The Rhode Island Department of Human Services website provides general reference information and aids such as an office locator lookup form.</p> <p>General information on the Family Independence program is available.</p> <p>The Rhode Island Dept of Human Services Code of Rules for the family independence program are available, however, these do not appear to be intended for general public use</p>	<p>http://www.dhs.state.ri.us/</p> <p>http://www.dhs.state.ri.us/dhs/famchild/dfipgm.htm</p> <p>http://www.ridhscode.org/</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
South Carolina	<p>The South Carolina Department of Social Services, Family Independence Program, provides TANF related services. County contact information is available using a clickable map.</p> <p><i>Note: Several pages were under construction or otherwise unavailable for review when this entry was created.</i></p>	<p>http://www.state.sc.us/dss/ http://www.state.sc.us/dss/fi/familyindependence.html http://www.state.sc.us/dss/economicservices/econservs.html</p>
South Dakota	<p>The South Dakota Department of Social Services TANF program webpages describe the program, general requirements, work requirements, and guidelines.</p> <p>Some forms can be completed, printed, and mailed.</p> <p>The South Dakota Service Direct portal provides access to the online forms. It can be reached from the State Government Information link on the State home page. A login is required.</p>	<p>http://www.state.sd.us/social/ http://www.state.sd.us/social/TANF/index.htm http://www.state.sd.us/social/TANF/Forms/index.htm http://www.state.sd.us/state/govern/index.asp http://www.sd.gov/</p>
Tennessee	<p>The Tennessee Department of Human Services Adult and Families Services Division provides a webpage on the Families First Program. Key aspects of the program are described such as time limits, responsibilities, education, and training. Medicaid/TennCare, food stamps and Families First applications are available from the Families First and Department of Human Services pages.</p> <p>Individuals must apply for Families First benefits at a Department of Human Services office. A clickable map provides directions to county office.</p>	<p>http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/ http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/famfir.htm</p>
Texas (I*)	<p>The State of Texas Assistance and Referral Systems (STARS) allows individuals to self-screen for potential eligibility for programs provided by the Texas Department of Human Services and other Texas State agencies.</p> <p>STARS is part of a broader modernization project the Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS).</p>	<p>http://www.txstars.net/ http://www.dhs.state.tx.us/ http://www.dhs.state.tx.us/programs/TIERS/</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
Utah	<p>The Utah Department of Workforce Services' webpages describe the Family Employment Program under the Financial Services category. General eligibility requirements are provided.</p> <p>An application form is provided, along with guidelines for items needed to verify the application data.</p> <p>Other online services available from the State are accessible from the State's home page.</p>	<p>http://jobs.utah.gov/</p> <p>http://jobs.utah.gov/services/financial/</p> <p>http://jobs.utah.gov/services/financial/fep.asp</p> <p>http://jobs.utah.gov/services/financial/how.asp</p> <p>http://www.utah.gov/government/onlineservices.html</p>
Vermont (I)	<p>The Vermont Agency of Human Services provides ServiceNet, which allows users to browse categories of services and identify programs and providers in their community.</p> <p>The Common Application tool also is described. This tool allows enrollment in multiple programs offered by multiple agencies without having to reenter information. The tool is available at several locations and is used with the assistance of trained workers with GOVnet access. An online demonstration is available.</p>	<p>http://www.ahs.state.vt.us</p> <p>http://www.ahs.state.vt.us/CommonApp/</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
<p>Virginia (I)</p>	<p>The Virginia Department of Social Services sponsors an eligibility screening website, accessible from the State home page via the online Citizen Services link. The user can screen for food stamps or TANF programs by filling out a short questionnaire. The list of local offices nearest to the user is displayed.</p> <p>Forms and applications are available from the Forms and Applications link.</p> <p>Descriptions of the TANF program are available.</p> <p>The City of Norfolk Department of Human Services' Automated Community Care Eligibility Screening System (ACCESS) is an online services/information directory and guide to federal, State and community resources. A three step questionnaire collects information on the family, employment, and income, providing a list of potentially eligible programs and the documents needed for application</p>	<p>http://www.dss.state.va.us/index.html</p> <p>http://www.vipnet.org/cmsportal/services_869/services_1111/index.html</p> <p>http://dssiad.dss.state.va.us/EligibilityScreening/</p> <p>http://www.dss.state.va.us/form/index.html</p> <p>http://www.dss.state.va.us/benefit/index.html</p> <p>http://www.dss.state.va.us/benefit/tanf.html</p> <p>http://www.norfolk.gov/humanservices/</p> <p>http://www.norfolk.gov/humanservices/prescreening/</p>
<p>Washington (I*)</p>	<p>The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services provides an online Trial Eligibility Calculator and the Community Services Division's Online Application for Services.</p> <p>Other websites of interest are the Eligibility Wizard from Children's Alliance, Washington's State-wide child advocacy organization, and the Employment Security's online application for unemployment insurance.</p>	<p>http://access.wa.gov/</p> <p>http://www.dshs.wa.gov/</p> <p>http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/TEC/</p> <p>https://wvs2.wa.gov/dshs/onlinecso/TANF_Support_Services.asp</p> <p>https://wvs2.wa.gov/dshs/onlineapp/introduction_1.asp</p> <p>http://www.washingtonparentpower.org/</p> <p>http://www.wa.gov/esd/ui/icapp/start.htm</p>

State or Federal Website	Summary	Links
Wisconsin	<p>The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Wisconsin Works (W-2) Program is described on several webpages, along with county agency contacts.</p> <p>The online W-2 manual contains a full description of the program, including eligibility requirements, but this does not appear to be intended for general public use (e.g., forms in Appendix III require login).</p> <p>Various forms and information resources intended for the Welfare-to-Work program field staff also are provided, including forms for assistance and eligibility determination.</p>	<p>http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/</p> <p>http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dws/w2/default.htm</p> <p>http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/wtw/usefultools.htm</p>
West Virginia	<p>The Office of Family Support, within the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, provides services and administers programs that empower customers to develop and achieve self-sufficiency.</p> <p>Applications for assistance may be obtained from and made at the Department's local offices in the person's county of residence (an online directory is available). A list of items to bring when applying for services is provided. An online Income Maintenance Manual may be browsed for eligibility requirements, but this does not appear to be intended for general public use.</p>	<p>http://www.wvdhhr.org/ofs/</p> <p>http://www.wvdhhr.org/ofs/applyforbenefits.htm</p>
Wyoming	<p>The Wyoming Department of Family Services provides a webpage that identifies the programs and services offered. Links to some program-specific pages are provided. <i>The TANF link was not available when the page was browsed.</i></p> <p>Webpages for the Personal Opportunities With Employment Responsibilities (POWER) program describe the program, general eligibility requirements, and benefits. Field offices with contact information are listed.</p>	<p>http://dfsweb.state.wy.us/</p> <p>http://dfsweb.state.wy.us/programlisting.html</p> <p>http://dfsweb.state.wy.us/P&P/powerpat.htm</p>

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APPENDIX B. WEBSITE EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Implementing comprehensive Government-to-Citizen online services can be achieved using an evolutionary approach. By starting small, website designers can identify the most important capabilities, quickly field a solution, incorporate lessons learned, build on successes, and iteratively add and field more capability. The guidance in this Appendix is intended to help website designers begin to define those iterations.

The guidance is applied to the framework described in [Section 2.1](#), to help minimize the risk of rework by allowing website designers to identify and prioritize near-term accomplishments within a broader vision. Sample key objectives, goals and challenges are listed for each of the evolutionary stages. This list may be used as a *first-cut* checklist. Website designers may add, revise, or remove items to reflect unique situations, establishing their specific objectives and goals while addressing business and technical challenges in an incremental fashion.

As the framework stages are progressive, the goals and challenges at the higher levels generally build on the capabilities of lower levels. For example, providing a preeligibility screening tool may depend on understanding key program eligibility requirements and devising accurate program descriptions to be referenced as a tool output. If it is anticipated that such a tool will be built, State website designers may consider building a uniform set of program descriptions first and fielding these for use while the tool is under development.

1. General Information Dissemination

Objective:

To establish a publicly recognized website or websites where individuals may find up-to-date, authoritative, and useful background information on the HS Agency's programs and services

Goals:

- To provide an easy-to-find and widely recognized Web presence (one or more websites) for HS Agency program information
- To provide sufficient information for an individual in need to understand the role of the agency and identify the programs and services offered
- To provide several channels for the public to initiate contact with agency representatives (e.g., by e-mail, by telephone, in writing, or in person)

Challenges:

- Identifying and involving stakeholders with life-cycle interest in the business, determining technical and operational aspects of the website, and setting up the management team's organizational structures
- Identifying the many types of website visitors and their separate and overlapping interests (e.g., information needs and computer literacy skills)
- Organizing and authoring website content to meet user information needs (e.g., using simple but effective terminology [e.g., "if you need food, cash, housing"] versus program or technical jargon)
- Creating a look and feel for the website (e.g., branding)
- Blending a user-centric with a service- or need-oriented view of the programs and services within the agency's administrative and organizational structures (e.g., action-oriented, where the user looks for help getting food, versus information-oriented, where the user finds the division of food and nutritional services information)
- Implementing effective life-cycle processes for publishing, revising, and retiring information published on the Web

2. Basic Forms and Referral

Objective:

To organize and provide detailed program information that an individual can review to assess general applicability, allowing the individual to initiate the application process

Goals:

- To provide users of the website with essential program information to determine the applicable programs or services (e.g., eligibility criteria and conditions)
- To provide users of the website with materials to apply for the program or services, such as online (e.g., printable) forms, lists of evidence needed, or descriptions of the application process
- To integrate the perspective of other public or private partners and providers into the website in a uniform manner (e.g., child care centers, clinics, and other agencies or community partners)
- To advertise the website so it becomes known to those who need to use it

Challenges:

- Establishing conventions for program and service descriptions to provide the most relevant information to each class of user in a meaningful and uniform way (e.g., purpose, essential eligibility criteria, conditions, contacts, and benefits)
- Providing downloadable application forms with instructions for submittal (written or online, multiple languages)
- Describing the application and other enrollment processes so that potential and new clients know what to expect
- Providing tools that allow users to search for program (or other) information of interest (e.g., text search and service-oriented taxonomies)
- Defining and collecting measures of the website's impact (e.g., statistics on the number of website-initiated program contacts versus other channels)

3. Personalized, Interactive Service Filtering

Objective:

To allow the public to determine quickly and confidently eligibility in offered programs or services without having any detailed knowledge of those programs or services

Goals:

- To provide automated aids that help the user identify the programs or services most (or least) applicable, without having to invest significant time reviewing program descriptions (e.g., able to do what-if analysis)
- To allow users to investigate details of the programs or services for which they might be eligible (refer to [Stage 2](#)).

Challenges:

- Consolidating essential eligibility conditions to present a consistent, multiprogram, user-oriented view
- Designing and implementing an interactive prescreening tool that can adapt to program changes (e.g., adding and removing programs and accurately checking eligibility criteria)
- Increasing public and other user awareness by publicizing the website and its capabilities
- Defining and collecting measures that indicate the use (both quantity and quality) of the prescreening website versus other channels (e.g., office visit, telephone, or mail)

4. Integrated Screening and Application Processes

Objective:

To provide the general public (or third parties acting on their behalf) with the capability to apply online for relevant programs and services, and to integrate this capability with the back-end eligibility systems and business process flows

Goals:

- To provide an online application process that is compatible with the prescreening capability (if one is implemented)
- To provide user interfaces that accommodate the skills and knowledge of different classes of users (e.g., public and field staff)
- To integrate the online, publicly accessible application submittal process with the back-end eligibility systems
- To harmonize the online, self-service application process with the manual intake business process (e.g., workers processing both written and online applications)

Challenges:

- Designing and implementing online applications (i.e., forms) that may be used across programs
- Interfacing the online application process to heterogeneous back-end systems using both manual and online means
- Interfacing the online application process with the prescreening process
- Determining a technical approach that allows for adding or removing programs in an efficient manner (e.g., adaptable)
- Protecting privacy of applicant information while in process and when completed
- Defining and collecting measures of the online application process versus other channels, including the ability to determine impact on the business practices and performance

5. Comprehensive, Individualized Self-Service

Objective:

To extend the scope and reach by providing citizen services covering the entire enrollment period, as well as enabling interaction with additional citizens, businesses, and government entities

Goals:

- To enable clients to participate online throughout the entire enrollment period, not just the front-end application process
- To enable online transactions between not only clients but other public, private, and government partners (e.g., inter- and intra-State Agencies and community partners)

Challenges:

- Defining and providing interactive services that support client-agency coordination (e.g., calendar and messaging)
- Defining and providing interactive services for the reliable exchange and/or modification of case data (e.g., change of address and income)
- Defining, integrating, and providing services for other entities, such as Government-to-Business partners and Government-to-Government entities (e.g., Agency to Agency)
- Facilitating and monitoring the coordination and direct exchange of information between clients and other agency partners (e.g., client enrolling in a course or workshop to fulfill training requirements, automatically updating the case status)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACF	Administration for Children and Families
ASP	Active Server Page
CHIP	Children's Health Insurance Program
CIO	Chief Information Officer
COM	Component Object Model
DBMS	database management system
DCOM	Distributed COM
DMV	Department of Motor Vehicles
DNA	Distributed interNet Architecture
FAQ	frequently asked question
GB	gigabyte
HHS	Health and Human Services
HS	Human Services
ID	identification
IIS	Internet Information Services
IP	Internet Protocol
ISP	Internet Service Provider
IT	information technology
J2EE	Java 2 Platform Enterprise Edition
JSP	Java Server Page
MB	megabyte
MHz	megahertz
NHSITRC	National Human Services Information Technology Resource Center
PDF	Portable Document Format
PIN	Personal Identification Number
RAM	Random Access Memory
SITC	State Information Technology Consortium
SQL	Structured Query Language
SSL	Secure Socket Layer
SSN	Social Security Number
TAG	Technical Advisory Group

TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
URL	Universal Resource Locator
XML	Extensible Markup Language
XSLT	Extensible Stylesheet Language Transformations

ENDNOTES

¹ The World Wide Web (the Web) and Internet are sometimes used synonymously; however, from a technical perspective, the Web is distinguished from the underlying internetworking technology on which it depends (the Internet). Web technology provides a uniform way to navigate and access information and business services. Other Internet technologies that have had social impact are Instant Messaging and e-mail.

² The Internet was more than 20 years old when the Web first appeared. See <http://www.isoc.org/internet/history/brief.shtml> and <http://www.pbs.org/internet/timeline/index.html> for a handy timeline, as well as <http://www.w3.org/History.html> and <http://www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/Overview.html> for information on the Web and its inventor.

³ See http://www.conectu.com/en_art_hitos.php for a chronology of Internet events.

⁴ For info on the UETA, see <http://www.nccusl.org/nccusl/DesktopDefault.aspx> or http://www.law.upenn.edu/bll/ulc/ulc_frame.htm.

⁵ A copy of the law may be found at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=106_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ229.106.pdf. Guidelines are available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/memoranda/m00-15.html>.

⁶ From a study based on the September 2001 U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, see <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/dn/index.html>. Internet demographic statistics are available from http://www.nua.com/surveys/how_many_online/index.html.

⁷ See <http://www.w3.org/WAI/> for information on improving accessibility. A copy of the Workforce Investment Act, Section 508, may be found at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=105_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ220.105.pdf.

⁸ Studies and resources on Internet use are available from the Pew Internet & American Life Project, such as "Counting on the Internet," December 29, 2002, <http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/toc.asp?Report=80>.

⁹ For total e-commerce sales (including travel), exceeding \$73 billion in 2002, see <http://www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?id=302> or <http://www.census.gov/eos/www/ebusiness614.htm>.

¹⁰ U.S. Government websites ranked as the sixth most visited from within the United States in February 2003 (see <http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/stories/2003/03/10/daily44.html?f=et87>).

¹¹ Some Federal e-government strategy resources include <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/egov/>, <http://www.estrategy.gov/>, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/pubpress/2002-11.html>, and <http://www.cio.gov/>.

¹² See the National Association of State CIOs (NASCIO) for news and links to State-related websites at <https://www.nascio.org/links/index.cfm>.

¹³ Information and links on local government activity may be found on the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) webpages at <http://www.icma.org>.

¹⁴ These interactions are commonly referred to as G2C, G2B, and G2G.

¹⁵ For analysis of welfare reform and service integration, see "Welfare Reform and the Development of Comprehensive Human Service Systems" and other reports, all available from the Rockefeller Institute at http://www.rockinst.org/quick_tour/federalism/service_integration.html.

¹⁶ *States* implies the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and territories of the United States.

¹⁷ Preeligibility screening is referred to as *prescreening* throughout the remainder of this report. The emphasis is on automated aids that provide a quick look, before a full eligibility determination is made.

¹⁸ For examples of federal and State links, see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/stlinks.htm>, <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/WIN/tanf.asp>, <http://dfsweb.state.wy.us/usmap.html>, or <http://www.state.hi.us/otherstates.htm>.

¹⁹ For ideas on terms to use for finding State and TANF program-specific pages, see http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/hs_dir2.htm or <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/tnfnames.htm>.

²⁰ The NHSITRC TANF TAG is sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The group meets periodically to identify and provide insight on emerging cross-State technology issues.

²¹ The term *HS Agency* is used to refer to departments, divisions, or other organizational structures at the federal, State, county, or municipality level, or to other political subdivisions that have responsibility for HS and related programs.

²² Federal e-government initiatives and activity may be identified through OMB (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/egov/>) and related links. The federal e-government strategy may be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg/egovstrategy.pdf>.

²³ The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-13) requires clearance when more than nine non-federal government entities are involved.

²⁴ The Massachusetts website was not released to the public at the time of this study.

²⁵ Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Washington support online applications. The authors did not review the Michigan application capability for the MICHild, Healthy Kids, and Healthy Kids for Pregnant Women programs.

²⁶ When identifying websites, the authors erred on the side of including one—even if it fell outside the primary interest on self-administered preeligibility screening for TANF—to offer as many examples as possible for review.

²⁷ The prescreening tools not only help to identify appropriate services, they also have a complementary effect, which lets the potential client know the services for which they most likely would not qualify. This knowledge may be useful to outside private or community groups that offer aid for those not directly eligible for public aid.

²⁸ The authors did not review the Vermont capability for this study.

²⁹ Location services may point to third-party, web-based Internet mapping services, such as MapQuest.

³⁰ For the purposes of this report, the term *client* is used to indicate an individual who researches, applies for, or receives assistance for themselves or their family. This person has limited knowledge of the HS programs and processes.

³¹ Examples of barriers include going from office to office to learn about and apply for services, searching the phone book and trying to associate needs with organizations, and applicants taking time off from work to come into the office.

³² See [Section 3](#) for statistics of website visits and use.

³³ “No wrong door”, “one-stop shopping”, and other phrases are used to refer to the integration of services across Agencies and programs. The objective is to provide the client with all appropriate services without the client having to visit different locations for each individual program.

³⁴ Pennsylvania and Texas use an online survey to gauge experiences.

³⁵ A *visit* implies someone accessing several pages on the website rather than accessing only one page and then going to another website. A *hit* implies a retrieval of a webpage and its constituent parts (such as a graphic). – Accessing a single page may generate multiple hits. How much time a user spends visiting a website could be an indicator of how much useful information is found.

³⁶ For example, indicators may be times outside normal business hours (e.g., early morning or late evening) or IP addresses associated with public Internet Service Providers (ISPs) (e.g., America Online or Yahoo).

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- ³⁷ Some initiatives that integrate programs are the Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System at <http://www.dhs.state.tx.us/programs/TIERS/> or the Colorado Benefits Management System at http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/govnr_dir/ospb/budget/factsheets/humanservices/fc-cbms.htm.
- ³⁸ An example of an e-service listing may be found on the New York State e-bizNYS website at <http://www.nysegov.com/e-bizNYS.cfm>.
- ³⁹ Taxonomies to organize the service hierarchy may be found by browsing the service directories on websites featured in [Section 3](#) and [Appendix A](#) (e.g., the Kentucky services index).
- ⁴⁰ Locators are mentioned in several discussions as a means to implement a *no wrong door* service integration strategy. See [Motivation and Benefits](#), Section 2.2.1, for details.
- ⁴¹ The summary of user input documents the assumptions for the eligibility response.
- ⁴² Some websites imply nonapplicability by providing the entire list of programs or services screened. The assumption is that if a program does not appear on the results list, then they are not eligible.
- ⁴³ An example of client costs is the amount the client would be expected to pay for child care.
- ⁴⁴ Some websites (e.g., Texas and Pennsylvania) allow for entering names. This appears to personalize user information, such as establishing an individual's family relationships and listing services by name.
- ⁴⁵ Texas has a 5-minute threshold, and Kentucky has a 10-minute threshold.
- ⁴⁶ The term *application* is reserved throughout this report to imply an HS program's *application for services*. Likewise, the term *program* implies an HS program, such as TANF. The term *software application* is used to denote the collection of software and data that operates on the client, Web, database, or other computer servers.
- ⁴⁷ Maintenance generally consists of three types: removing defects (e.g., bugs), perfecting the operation of the web-based software application (e.g., adding user interface features or optimizing webpage display), and adapting to evolving needs (e.g., additional HS programs or functions/features).
- ⁴⁸ Michigan notes that it uses average local rates and adjusts them for a reasonable State-wide value. Florida simplified how it handles earned income disregards to reduce user interface complexity.
- ⁴⁹ GovBenefits, Michigan, Washington, and Texas indicate that they use rule-based or table-driven approaches for rules or user interface flow.
- ⁵⁰ Because rule-based approaches can be resource-intensive, Texas uses the prescreening tool as an operational prototype to work out scalability issues as it pursues its TIERS project.
- ⁵¹ The Pennsylvania tool allows for prescreening data to be copied into the application form.
- ⁵² Costs were not investigated in any depth; rather, the authors obtained a general impression from the States. Because costs are always qualified, it is suggested that users contact the individuals listed in [Section 3](#) for additional insight.
- ⁵³ Some history of the releases is available in [Section 3](#).
- ⁵⁴ Washington enabled its website to accept ZIP Codes only within the counties being piloted. Although this did not stop all unintentional use, it appeared to work well.
- ⁵⁵ Michigan, for example, used a pilot to help the State refine its technical approach and simplify the questionnaire.
- ⁵⁶ Kentucky notes some positive experiences with its Children's Health campaign; however, users must be prepared for this type of success with an increase in demand.
- ⁵⁷ Overall, looking across many government-sponsored websites, it appears that website content is beginning to adapt to how citizens see the world (e.g., needs and services), rather than presenting the Agency organizational structure and program viewpoints.
- ⁵⁸ For example, the Kentucky websites use *kycares* or *kentuckycares* with a top-level domain of .org, .net, and .com, each redirecting the user to the official website at KyCARES.net.
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⁵⁹ Many websites offer different techniques to satisfy user information needs and capabilities, such as navigating to program descriptions by name or category, keyword or text searches, or FAQs. Pennsylvania is building a power user interface for those processing many applications per week.

⁶⁰ Some general conventions include intercepting the back button and other browser controls to manage screen flow, denoting required or optional input fields, performing lexical and syntactic checks of user input with some reasonableness checks across fields, optimizing page size for download over modems, providing immediate and visible feedback when performing calculations, and reducing flicker from independently updated parts of a screen.

⁶¹ Michigan, for example, uses rollovers to explain form entries. The Pennsylvania website undergoes a literacy review to determine ease of use.

⁶² For example, if a website is targeted to the general public, then information that would appeal to legislatures, researchers, or other professionals may be omitted explicitly and provided via links to other pages (e.g., policy studies and statistics).

⁶³ The 12 languages are English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Russian, Laotian, Polish, French, Chinese, Arabic, Korean, and Albanian.

⁶⁴ GovBenefits leverages guidelines and insight from the Social Security Administration to meet accessibility goals.

⁶⁵ Some issues include user platform configurations, networking configurations, lost passwords, and users not understanding the online application or the application process.

⁶⁶ Pennsylvania and Texas use online surveys to sample user feedback.

⁶⁷ These pages may be accessible only through a website-provided search tool, may be part of a frameset, or may have remained after a redesign of the website.

⁶⁸ The authors omit some details from these descriptions to keep these summaries short. Users should contact the individuals listed to follow up on specific questions.