

Making Life Easier

Citizen-Friendly Government Program Wins "Oscar"

(NAPSA)—If you think the Oscars are only for the movies, you're in for a surprise. FirstGov.gov (www.firstgov.gov), the official Web portal of the federal government, just won an "Oscar" for innovation in government from Harvard University and the Council for Excellence in Government.

FirstGov.gov was one of five awardees selected from nearly 1,000 government nominees from across the country. It was the only federal government program to make it to the final round in the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award program, sponsored by Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

One-Stop Web Portal

As the federal government's official Web portal, it gives citizens easy, secure access to more than 180 million pages of information from federal, state and local governments. More than 1.4 million users visit the site each week seeking information through a Citizen, Business or Government gateway.

Visitors can get a copy of their birth certificate, choose retirement benefits, apply for student loans, file taxes, report quarterly wage earnings, file for a patent or buy stamps to name just a few services.

In addition, the site is supported by a powerful search engine, which means users don't need to know agency names or program titles in order to find the information they need.

FirstGov.gov also accepts e-mail queries from Americans seeking information on government programs and services.



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During Operation Iraqi Freedom, FirstGov.gov provided citizens with a central point of access for information on the war and provided the public with a way to send troops their words of thanks and encouragement.

The site was launched two-and-a-half-years ago, but was recently redesigned to make it more useful for citizens. Modifications, which included the addition of e-mail service and easier navigation tools, were made based on feedback from citizens.

President Bush has made it a major goal of his administration to expand electronic government and give citizens government on their terms. This new focus on making government more responsive and accountable included the creation of the Office of Citizen Services and Communications at the U.S. General Services Administration that now manages FirstGov.gov.