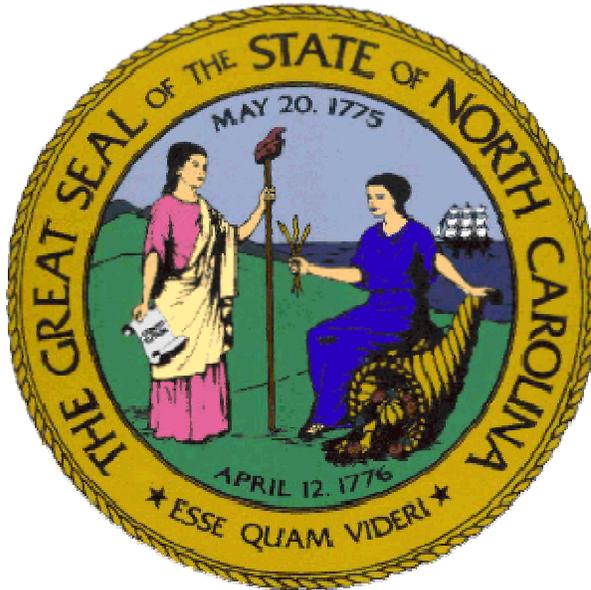**Upgrade State Portal Report**

As directed by Senate Bill 202, Section 6.14

December 2009

Prepared By:

Office of State Budget and Management

OSBM

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I. INTRODUCTION

Scope of Study

Section 6.14 of Senate Bill 202 directed the Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM), in coordination with the Office of Information Technology Services (ITS), to submit a plan to upgrade the state web portal. Analysis conducted by OSBM concluded that a full plan could not be developed because fundamental questions of governance and organization must be resolved first. Section 6.14 reads as follows:

> **UPGRADE STATE PORTAL**
> **SECTION 6.14.(a)** The Office of State Budget and Management, in coordination with the Office of the State Chief Information Officer, shall develop a detailed plan to upgrade the State portal. The upgrade plan shall include consideration of the need to (i) improve State services for citizens and businesses; (ii) offer online services; (iii) provide crucial, up-to-the-minute emergency information; and (iv) provide a multipurpose, interactive Web portal.
> **SECTION 6.14.(b)** Prior to developing the plan, the Office of State Budget and Management shall obtain the advice and assistance of State and local government agencies, businesses operating within the State, and private citizens to ensure that all potential users have the opportunity to submit recommendations for inclusion in the final plan. The Office of State Budget and Management shall also conduct an inventory of capabilities that are available on other states' portals. With the assistance of State agencies, the Office of State Budget and Management shall prioritize potential capabilities. Based on these priorities, the Office of State Budget and Management shall develop a phased plan to allow incremental implementation that includes a detailed time line for each phase and shall include the cost associated with each phase.
> **SECTION 6.14.(c)** The interactive Web portal shall include the capability for citizens, businesses, and State and local government agencies to complete online transactions, obtain live help from State agencies, and access emergency information in real time. The portal shall include appropriate security measures and devices to include encryption, enterprise-class firewalls/gateway security, real-time intrusion prevention and detection, virtual private networks, vulnerability management, and virus protection.
> **SECTION 6.14.(d)** By December 1, 2009, the Office of State Budget and Management shall submit the upgrade plan to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Information Technology and to the Fiscal Research Division. The report shall include an explanation of any recommendations that were not included in the final plan with an explanation as to why each was not included and the cost associated with implementation of those items.

II. WHAT IS A GOVERNMENT WEB PORTAL?

From Wikipedia:

> A **web portal . . .** presents information from diverse sources in a unified way. Apart from the standard search engine feature, web portals offer other services such as e-mail, news, stock prices, information, databases and entertainment. Portals provide a way for enterprises to provide a consistent look and feel with access control and procedures for

multiple applications and databases, which otherwise would have been different entities altogether.

Typically web portals are part of a comprehensive strategy to communicate with, or provide services to, the customer or constituent of the organization. The strategy includes other channels of communication such as phone, email, television and radio ads, and in-person offices. Each channel has different properties and is useful for reaching different members of the public.

Over time web based communication has become a more important channel. By the end of 2008, 82% of North Carolinians used the Internet regularly (at home, work, public access, etc.) compared to 62% in 1999.[1] In the two-year period 2008-2009, 47% of adults nationwide visited a government website compared to 28% in 2000-2001.[2]

Web Portal Designs

There are three basic web portal designs. The first, represented by figure 1, is often used in decentralized organizations. The central web portal provides the ability to search and find content in the agency websites through links. The central portal requires understanding of all the agency website content to organize and describe the information in a way that the public would find intuitive. There should be consistent branding and design across the web portal and agency websites to make interaction intuitive to the public. But, for the most part, agency websites would be operated independently.
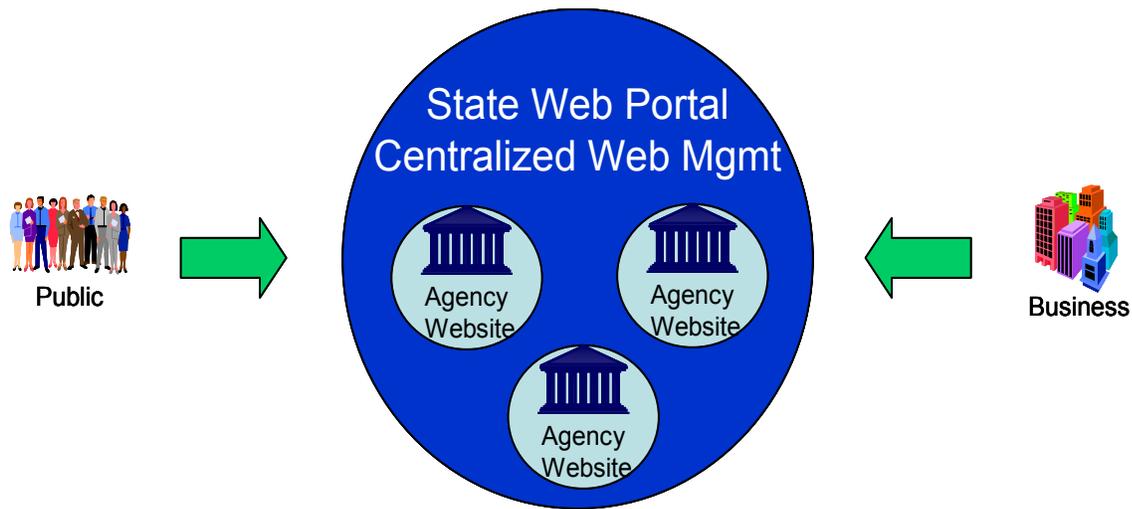
Figure 1.
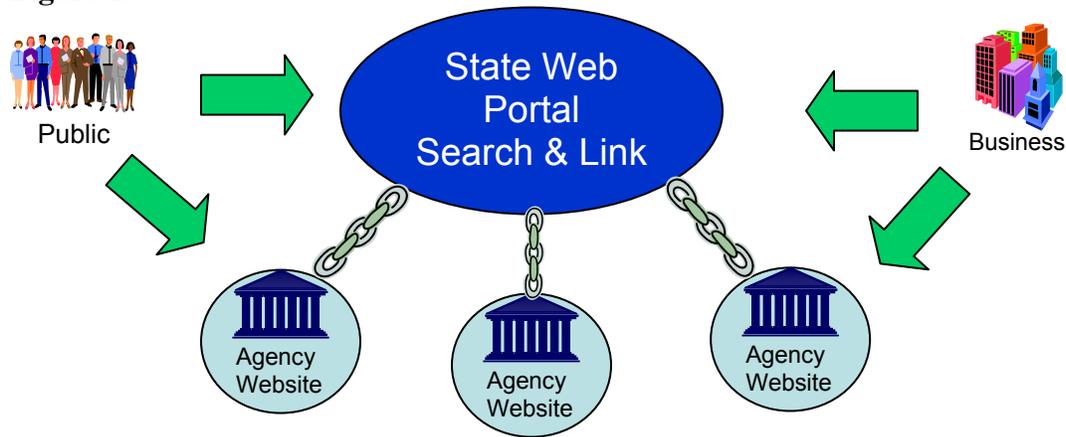
The second web portal design, represented by figure 2, is often used by very centralized organizations. The infrastructure behind agency websites is fully part of the web portal infrastructure. Content management occurs in a centralized tool and every aspect of every web page uses centralize templates. Service transactions use centralized infrastructure like authentication, registration, and payment services. This is a consolidated approach to web management and service transactions that costs less and provides the public with the clearest picture of an organization. However, it requires full organizational integration to be succesful.

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[1] e-NC Authority
[2] Pew Research Center

Figure 2.

The last design represents a hybrid approach. Figure 3 depicts a web portal that has some aspects of integration but still leaves much autonomy in the agency websites. It uses a reference architecture where service transaction processing capabilities are built into the web portal platform itself while also being integrated with agency web sites and associated transaction processing capabilities. This model saves some money by having some centralized infrastructure and provides some consistency in service transaction with the public.

Figure 3.
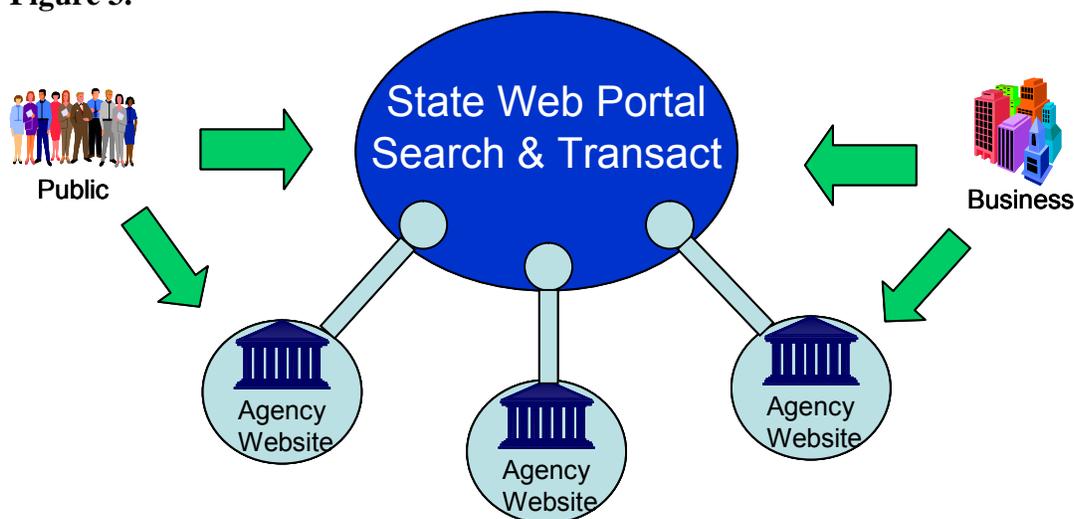
Case Study – USA.gov

In June 2000, President Clinton announced a gift from the Federal Search Foundation, a nonprofit organization established by Internet entrepreneur Eric Brewer, and instructed that an official U.S. web portal be launched within 90 days. USA.gov went online on September 22, 2000, under the name FirstGov.gov. The General Services Administration (GSA) and 22 federal agencies funded the initiative in 2001 and 2002. Since 2002, USA.gov has received an annual appropriation from the U.S. Congress. In January 2007, FirstGov.gov officially changed its name to USA.gov.

The Federal Citizen Information Center (FCIC), a GSA government publication and 1-800 citizen phone service, was merged with USA.gov in 2003 to create the Office of Citizen Services and Communications (OCSC) in GSA. FCIC had a 40-year history of providing U.S. Government information and services directly to citizens. OCSC currently operates a variety of information channels including web, telephone, print, and email. It provides leadership and resources government wide to web and contact center managers to improve government's response to citizens.

The website's program includes:
- USA.gov -- the official portal of the U.S. government,
- GobiernoUSA.gov -- the Spanish partner to USA.gov,
- GovGab.gov -- a blog that shows the usefulness, practicality, helpfulness, and vitality of federal, state, and local government information,
- Pueblo.gsa.gov -- provides citizen access to hundreds of the best federal publications,
- Consumeraction.gov -- a consumer help site built around FCIC's popular Consumer Action Handbook,
- Consumidor.gov -- the Spanish partner to consumeraction.gov, and
- Kids.gov -- a portal to government websites designed for kids.

The Program also supports RSS feeds, email alerts and two subscription e-letters.

Other programs include:
- The contact Center Program provides direct telephone (1-800 FED-INFO), email and online assistance to citizens through the National Contact Center (NCC), as well as an array of direct contact center services to customer agencies.
- Information and Education Program coordinates outreach (educational media and public service advertising) and delivery of all FCIC services (print distribution, website and contact center support, as well as email and telephone services) to agency customers.
- Government-wide Leadership Program provides guidance and support to web and contact center managers across the government through training courses (Web Manager University), citizen focused research and the organization and management of interagency steering committees.

USA.gov has won numerous <u>awards and media endorsements</u>, including Time Magazine's 2007 "Top 25 Sites We Can't Live Without," listing among the "Best of..." by *Money Magazine,* "Favorite Places on the Web" by the *Chicago Sun Times,* "Hot Sites" by *USATODAY.com,* and "Top 100 Classic Sites" by *PC Magazine.* It also has won "#1 in Global E-Government Readiness" in the <u>United Nations'</u> Global E-Government Readiness Report 2005, "#1 in Overall Federal e-Government" by <u>Brown University's</u> Taubman Center for Public Policy, and the "Innovations in American Government Award" by <u>Harvard University's</u> <u>Kennedy School of Government</u>.

GobiernoUSA.gov was awarded as a finalist for the *Arroba de oro,* ("the golden @"), has won the Web Content Managers' "Best Practices" award, and consistently scores among the highest in Government or private sectors in the <u>American Customer Satisfaction Index</u>.

III. THE STATE WEB PORTAL

In February, 2000, Governor Hunt announced the *NC @ Your Service* (ncgov.com) portal initiative and directed the expeditious implementation of e-government. The E-Government Steering Committee was created to implement the initiative. The committee adopted the following goals: a citizen-centric focus; common business models, processes and shared technology infrastructure services; and a standards-based approach for infrastructure and applications.

In June 2000, a contract was signed to staff the *NC @ Your Service* Project Office and to implement the statewide portal. The first release of the portal was implemented in July 2000. At the same time, the General Assembly issued legislation to address the creation of centralized web portals. It gave Information Technology Services (ITS) the responsibility for developing "architecture, requirements, and standards for the development, implementation and operation" of centralized web portals. The Information Resource Management Council, the State's IT policy making body at the time, was given policy oversight responsibility over ITS activities.

The state portal was developed and maintained using an outsourcing company until 2003, at which time ITS took over the portal's maintenance responsibility. Also, the NC Portal Advisory Council was established to provide oversight. It facilitated a session with agency stakeholders to gather feedback on a portal direction. The group voted on the most important value proposition of the portal:

- Efficiency and effectiveness (24 votes) – Convenience for both the public and the state.
- Customer service and satisfaction (21 votes) – Ease of use, privacy and security.
- Accessibility (14 votes) – Usability and access.
- Communications (10 votes) – Branding, visibility, and public notices.
- e-Democracy (8 votes) – Transparency and public feedback on decisions.
- Cost (4 votes) – Ease of compliance, time savings, and increase revenue.

In late 2004, the portal was redesigned. There have been minimal changes to the portal since.

Present Portal Governance and Status

In 2004, Senate Bill 991 significantly increased the State CIO's statewide authority over IT project oversight, approval, and planning. The legislation also disbanded the IRMC and created an Information Technology Advisory Board to advise the State CIO. An Information Technology Fund was established to support the State CIO's statewide responsibilities. A move to consolidate agency hardware and other infrastructure-related components was initiated. These changes emphasized the role of the CIO as technology oversight and not information oversight. However, with the removal of IRMC, the CIO now oversees central portals.[3]

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[3] Article 11B. Electronic Access to State Services.
§ 66-58.20. Development and implementation of Web portals; public agency links.
(a) The Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) shall develop the architecture, requirements, and standards for the development, implementation and operation of one or more centralized Web portals that will allow persons to access State government services on a 24-hour basis. ITS shall submit its plan for the implementation of the Web portals to the State Chief Information Officer for review and approval. When the plan is approved by the State Chief Information Officer, ITS shall move forward with development and implementation of the statewide Web Portal

In 2005, Duke University's Terry Sanford School of Public Policy conducted a study of the State of North Carolina web portal and compared it to portal environments of the leading states.   It noted an advanced portal can help state governments provide easier access to public information, enhance service delivery, increase citizen involvement, and increase the transparency of and efficiency in government processes. This study recognized four problems associated with managing the state portal:

(1) The portal is not the primary responsibility of individuals who oversee it,
(2) The portal oversight agency lacks a clear management structure and procedures for evolution,
(3) The current portal is not responsive to user needs, and
(4) The portal has very little dedicated funding.

Through a best practices survey of the top ten[4] state portals, the research showed successful portals have at least a $2 million budget for technology and staff; average staffing levels of 4 to 5 full-time employees for those states that manage their own portals; a defined management structure with clearly delineated responsibilities and authority; and staff dedicated to user responsiveness and evolution, adapting their portal to changing needs and technology.

The Office of State CIO has not traditionally had a mission to provide public information and service access. Instead, it has dual roles in managing information technology for the State of North Carolina. One role includes its statewide responsibilities that cut across agency lines. These responsibilities include project approval and oversight, IT procurement, security, and information technology planning and budgeting. The State CIO also plays an operational role by leading ITS, which supplies some of the information technology used by state agencies and local governments. As a result of this, and the lack of funding, the CIO and ITS have not been able to sustain development of the portal.

The most telling evaluation of the state web portal can be seen in the emails the portal receives. It paints a picture of a public that is confused about finding proper state service, about finding proper point of contact, about figuring out who is in charge. For example, a couple is moving to North Carolina and is looking for information on school systems but can't figure out where it is. Another person is interested in ordering a map of North Carolina but doesn't know where to go. Another person is looking for information on probate. Another person is interested in the North Carolina law on jet skis and boats. These are typical examples of users who request help in finding information and services of the state.

IV. COMPARING STATE WEB PORTALS

State web portals, e-government, and IT management activities are ranked by various organizations. Table 1 shows three different rankings of state web portals. The Brookings

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system.
(b) Each State department, agency, and institution under the review of the State
Chief Information Officer shall functionally link its Internet or electronic services to a
centralized Web portal system established pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.
(2000-67, s. 7.9; 2004-129, s. 28.)

[4] The Center for Digital Government top ten state portals surveyed included Indiana, Tennessee, Virginia, Michigan, Nebraska, Maine, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Arizona, and Mississippi.

Institution ranking examines nearly two dozen features of digital innovation, including: personalization, interactivity, transparency, PDA access, disability access, language translation, number of online services, privacy, security, and user feedback. The Center for Digital Government conducts the Best of the Web ranking. These awards are judged by a panel of experts on a wide range of categories, including site accessibility, innovation, cost-savings, ease of use, and exceptional service to the public. North Carolina does not rank in the Best of the Web evaluations, and in the Brookings Institution ranking it is ranked low given its size.

Table 1.
Rank by Brookings:

State	Brookings Ranking 2008	Best of the Web 2008	Best of the Web 2009
Delaware	1	Finalist	
Georgia	2		
Florida	3		
California	4	3	2
Massachusetts	5		
Maine	6	2	4
Kentucky	7		
Alabama	8	5 (tie)	Finalist
Indiana	9		
Tennessee	10		
Connecticut	11		
Colorado	12	Finalist	5
Arizona	13		
Arkansas	14	Finalist	3
Alaska	15		
Pennsylvania	16		
Texas	17	4	
Oregon	18		
Washington	19		
New York	20		
South Dakota	21		
New Jersey	22		
Ohio	23		
Wisconsin	24		
Rhode Island	25	5 (tie)	Finalist
Michigan	26	Finalist	Finalist
Virginia	27	1	
South Carolina	28		
North Carolina	29		
Minnesota	30		
North Dakota	31		
Iowa	32		
Kansas	33		
Oklahoma	34		Finalist
Utah	35		1
New Hampshire	36		

State	Brookings Ranking 2008	Best of the Web 2008	Best of the Web 2009
Nebraska	37	Finalist	Finalist
Illinois	38		
Missouri	39		
West Virginia	40		
Montana	41		
Louisiana	42		
Idaho	43		
Vermont	44		Finalist
Nevada	45		
Hawaii	46		
Wyoming	47		
Maryland	48		
New Mexico	49		
Mississippi	50		

Governance

The states of Delaware, California, Maine, and Alabama seem to have the most consistent high rankings in Table 1. Common elements of the four states include:
1. A dedicated funding source.
2. Ownership by an organization with a mission focused on portal operation.
3. Cross government participation and feedback in the portal through a council.

Further information on the four states is below.

- **Delaware http://delaware.gov/**
  - *Background and Funding:* The portal is developed and maintained by the eGov Team of the Department of Technology and Information (DTI) and the Government Information Center, which is part of the Department of State. The portal is funded by the state.
  - *Governance:* The Government Information Center takes the lead governance role. A Portal Management Team provides guidance.
- **California http://www.state.ca.us/**
  - *Background and Funding:* The portal is developed and maintained by the eServices Office within the Department of Technology Services (DTS). DTS is being consolidated with three other technology divisions under the Office of the State CIO in 2009. The redesigned portal launched in January 2008. According to a memo from the State CIO, all agencies were requested to use templates to achieve a consistent look and feel. According to a document published by the California Research Bureau in 2006, agency web sites and the portal are considered basic functions and business channels of state government and, therefore, are funded using a line-item appropriation from the state's general fund and supplemented, as appropriate, by appropriations from special funds that benefit from the portal.
  - *Governance:* California uses a federated governance model. The portal is governed by an eServices Steering Committee, which develops and enforces policies, standards, templates, navigation, and identity management. The Steering Committee consists of the directors of a cross-section of departments. The

eServices Director manages day-to-day operations and acts as a liaison between the eServices Group and state agencies. A State Portal Review Board, consisting of the CIOs of a cross-section of departments, provides guidance. A state agency web masters group ensures collaboration and communication among content owners.

- **Maine http://maine.gov/**
  - *Background and Funding:* The portal is outsourced through InforME, a public-private entity with NIC Inc. and funded via convenience fees charged for transactions, subscriptions, and other services.
  - *Governance:* InforME was created by statute in 1997. A Portal Manager oversees day-to-day operations, and a 15-member InforME Board provides oversight.
- **Alabama http://www.alabama.gov/**
  - *Background and Funding:* The portal is outsourced through a public-private entity called Alabama Interactive, a wholly owned subsidiary of NIC Inc. and funded using transaction fees.
  - *Governance:* Documents from 2002 indicate portal governance was managed by an E-government Technical Review Committee within the Information Services Division (ISD) and procedures were established for working with the vendor. Committee members included the State CIO, Assistant Director of ISD Infrastructure, State Comptroller, Assistant Director of ISD Applications Development and Support, Manager of ISD Web Services, Assistant Director of ISD Customer Service, and Manager of ISD Project Management. According to the CIO's web site, ISD develops state agency web sites.

Portal governance information gathered from all the states shows that many states have chosen to outsource portal operations and fund the portal through transaction fees. In addition, some interagency council is usually involved in the operation of the portal. Table 2 provides governance information on all the state portals.

Table 2.

State	Portal Outsourced	Self-funded via Transaction & Service Fees	State Funded	Hybrid Funding Model	Portal Council or Advisory Group / Board	State Agency Web Content Owners Group	Portal Users Group
AL	●	●					
AK			●				
AZ*	●			●			
AR	●	●			●		
CA			●		●	●	
CO	●	●			●		
CT			●		●		
DE			●		●		
FL							
GA**			●				
HI	●	●			●		
ID	●	●					
IL			●				
IN	●	●			●		
IA	●	●			●		
KS	●	●			●		
KY	●	●			●		

State	Portal Outsourced	Self-funded via Transaction & Service Fees	State Funded	Hybrid Funding Model	Portal Council or Advisory Group / Board	State Agency Web Content Owners Group	Portal Users Group
LA			•				
ME	•	•			•		
MD			•				
MA			•		•		•
MI			•				
MN			•		•		
MS			•				
MO			•				
MT	•	•			•		
NE	•	•			•		
NV			•				
NH			•				
NJ			•				
NM			•		•		
NY**			•				
NC			•		•		
ND			•		•		
OH			•				
OK	•	•			•		
OR			•		•		
PA			•			•	
RI	•	•			•		
SC	•	•			•		
SD			•				
TN	•	•					
TX	•	•					
UT	•	•					
VT	•	•			•		
VA	•	•				•	
WA			•				
WV	•	•			•		
WI							
WY			•				

*   AZ is changing its portal vendor and will change its funding model from hybrid to self-funding.
**   GA and NY issued RFPs in 2008 for outsourcing and will become self-funding.

Portal Features

Portals are often judged on features the public has come to expect from modern websites. A sampling of portal features from Alabama, California, Delaware, and Maine, in Table 3, shows that the North Carolina portal is missing many features. But state web portals are not compared with each other by the public. They are compared to all websites in their ability to provide modern conveniences. North Carolina has not kept up. Another important point is that all four portals include a survey of customer satisfaction with the portal. These are service focused organizations that explicitly measure their progress.

Table 3.

Features	Alabama	California	Delaware	Maine	North Carolina
RSS, email, mobile updates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Photo submission, Flickr, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Videos, Podcasts	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Tagging / Share	No	Yes	No	No	No
Features	**Alabama**	**California**	**Delaware**	**Maine**	**North Carolina**
Online Survey	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Live Chat / Support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Mobile Access	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
iPhone Apps / Widgets / Micro-formats	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Alerts, Roads, Weather, Delays	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Public Records and/or Database Search / Data Downloads	By subscription	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Multiple Languages	Yes	Spanish	Yes	Yes	Spanish
GIS / Maps	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Public Meeting / Calendar Feature	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Adjustable Text Size	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

V. NORTH CAROLINA INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND SERVICE ACCESS

Inside the state there are various pockets of information dissemination besides the state web portal. They are spread across many state agencies.

Agency Internet Communication

State agencies' web sites have a wide range of sophistication. Some are modern with privacy policies, intuitive navigation, and contain important information that takes the burden off of staff in answering public inquiries. Others seem to exist as an obligation and bury information important to the public. In addition, there is no consistent look and feel among state websites and no attempt at state-wide organization. The public has no consistent way to know they are dealing with state government. Even the most basic element, consistent naming of websites, is nowhere to be found. As seen in Table 4 below, four of the 21 agencies use ".gov" as their web domain, five use ".com," six use ".us," four use ".org," and one uses ".net."

Table 4.

Agency	Website Name
Administration	www.doa.nc.gov
Commerce	www.nccommerce.com
Correctons	www.doc.state.nc.us
Crime Control & Public Safety	www.nccrimecontrol.org
Cultural Resources	www.ncdcr.gov
Environment & Natural Sciences	www.enr.state.nc.us
Health & Human Services	www.ncdhhs.gov
Juvenile Justice & Delinquency	www.ncdjjdp.org

Prevention	
Agency	Website Name
Revenue	www.dor.state.nc.us
Transportation	www.ncdot.org
Governor	www.governor.state.nc.us
Lieutenant Governor	www.ltgov.state.nc.us
State Auditor	www.ncauditor.net
Justice	www.ncdoj.com
Insurance	www.ncdoi.com
Agriculture	www.ncagr.gov
Treasurer	www.nctreasurer.com
Labor	www.nclabor.com
Secretary of State	www.secstate.state.nc.us
Public Instruction	www.ncpublicschools.org

Agency email has a similar problem. Thirteen major agencies run their own e-mail infrastructure apart from ITS. They include Department of Cultural Resources, Department of Health and Human Services, Employment Security Commission, Crime Control and Public Safety, Department of Justice, Department of Public Instruction, Office of State Auditor, Department of Corrections, Department of Revenue, Secretary of State, NC Ports, NC Community College System, and the State Treasurer.[5] In addition, the e-mail addresses of state agencies have a similar problem to state websites. They are a mix of ".us," ".org," ".gov," ".com," and ".net" with a variety of nomenclatures.

Specific Dissemination Services

Besides agency websites and email, a number of agencies have specific statewide communication and service access programs.

State Operator Assistance – Office of Information Technology Services
    Service: Phone number provided to direct callers to appropriate agency
    Marketed: Phone books: blue pages, state portal, agency portals
    Metrics: About 5,000 in-coming calls a month
    FTE: 4 FTE; (1 FTE handling incoming calls)
    Funding: $156K

Care-Line – Office of Citizen Services, Department of Health and Human Services
    Service: Toll-free phone number to provide information and referrals regarding all human services in government and non-profit organizations (not just DHHS). It includes Spanish language access. In addition, NCcareLINK is a website providing information about state services. This program is a collaboration between DHHS and other government and non-profit organizations. It refers stakeholders across the State.
    Marketed: Public Service Announcements via radio, TV; posters
    Metrics: 332,596 callers in FY09 (including 13,700 non-English inquiries)
    FTE: 24 FTE (15 CareLine / 9 Admin staff for Ombudsman case resolution, database management, staff supervision and training

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[5] The first three agencies are in the process of converting to the ITS infrastructure.

Funding: $1.4M

The Directory of North Carolina Business Licenses and Permits – Business Service Center, Department of Commerce

> **Service:** The State of North Carolina has no single business license that will ensure compliance with all regulatory requirements. Identifying all the licenses, permits and/or other regulatory approvals required for business activity is a crucial step in the planning process of starting a new business. The Business ServiCenter assists the public in identifying state licensing requirements for specific business activities through a 1-800 number and online directory.
> **Marketed:** Brochure, print ads, National Public Radio, Chamber of Commerce visits
> **Metrics:** Answer all business-related questions, business recruitment, retention
> **FTE:** 6
> **Funding:** $525K

Agency for Public Telecommunications – Department of Administration

> **Service:** APT connects citizens with government through effective and efficient communications strategies involving multimedia productions and advertising placements, teleconferencing and web-streaming events and live, interactive public affairs television programming via cable and the Internet. APT develops effective, targeted, communications strategies, training initiatives and public outreach.
> **Marketed:** 1) Presentations to state agencies; 2) Outreach to state purchasing agents; 3) E-mails to public information officers.
> **Metrics:** Assists state agencies in their communication needs: 1) Media services: video/ www.ncapt.tv = 100-200 projects/year; 2) State services network (webcasts, webstreaming, Windows media file creation) = 150 projects/yr; 3) OpenNet, regular news show = 104 programs/yr.
> **FTE:** 13 FTE plus freelance temps, contractors
> **Funding:** 650K in 2010 appropriations; $6M in receipts in 2009 (vs. $4.5M budget)

State Publications Clearinghouse– State Library, Department of Cultural Resources

> **Service:** The NC State Documents Depository System was created by GS 125-11 and became effective on October 1, 1987. The Publications Clearinghouse collects, catalogs, classifies, and distributes NC agency publications to the members of the state library depository system. In addition, the Government and Heritage Library is mandated to serve as the official permanent depository for all state publications. Clearinghouse staff and depository librarians work together to facilitate access to current and historic agency publications to all North Carolinians. In response to the shift in publishing practices from print to digital publishing, the Clearinghouse is now collecting, cataloging and adding digital publications to the State Publications Collection and adding records for these items to WorldCat.org, the world's largest online network of library content and services. The repository provides a unique, stable URL for each publication. These "permanent" URL's may be used by libraries in library catalog records and on web pages. The Digital Information Management Program manages digital preservation for all items in the repository.
> **Marketed:** Brochures, Monthly themed posters
> **Metrics:** 13,000+ visitors/year
> **FTE:** 4 FTE

Funding: $36.5M for entire Government & Heritage Library

The Access to State Government Information Initiative – State Library, State Data Center (the Office of State Budget and Management), State Archives and Records, UNC Digital Library & Archives

> **Service:** The Access to State Government Information Initiative is a collaborative effort across state agencies. Project staff and partners work together to reassess the State Library's approach to identifying, collecting, preserving, and providing continued access to state government information and develop strategies for managing born-digital state information for long-term availability and use.
> **Marketed:** Website
> **Metrics:** 22,000+ calls, emails, fax, letters
> **FTE:** 4 FTE
> **Funding:** The Initiative is funded by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Statewide Leadership Grant.

Publications Division – Secretary of State

> **Service:** The Publications Division helps thousands of North Carolina citizens, businesses and school children find specific information about state government. Available resources include an organizational chart of state government and several pages of links to North Carolina state government, education and state information websites.
> **Marketed:** State Fair
> **Metrics:** About 10 calls per day
> **FTE:** 1 FTE
> **Funding:** About $200K

VI. FINDINGS

Findings of this study include:
1. Communication with the public about statewide information and services is decentralized and would be far more effective if centralized and measured.
2. In addition to a statewide council, the state portal must be part of an organization dedicated to communicating state government information and services to the public.
3. Design of the state portal should reflect the organization of the state.
4. The state portal must have a full time staff and a budget.
5. Long term planning for the state portal can not be conducted until basic resource and organizational issues are resolved.

1. Communication with the public about statewide information and services is decentralized and would be far more effective if centralized and measured.

Besides the state web portal, OSBM found seven organizations dedicated to providing general state government information to the public. Programs in these organizations have:
- Redundant databases of information,
- Redundant directories and inventories of state information, services and operations,
- Multiple phone numbers

- Overlapping missions to provide public access to state services
- Limited marketing.

If centralized, these services could share databases of information about state services with phone, email, and web inquiries. Directories could be maintained and found in one place. Publications and video on important state activities could be posted with a higher profile on the state website. Most importantly, there could be an organization dedicated to letting the public know how to access government no matter the medium or the subject.

Consolidation could be virtual instead of physical for some of the organizations. It is likely that the Department of Commerce program or the State Library program is too integrated into other aspects of their agencies activities to be removed. That is why it is critical that this centralized organization have a governance council.

Besides consolidation of organization there is also consolidation of process around best practices so agency websites can have the tools to easily improve. Policy and standard setting by the consolidated organization would be critical. USA.gov has done this for the federal government. Resources include:

- Putting Citizens First: Transforming Online Government[6]
- Becoming a Citizen Centered Government Through Best Practices in Web Management[7]
- www.webcontent.gov
- www.usability.gov

Consolidation would establish an organization and processes that are dedicated to the right mission, but that is not enough. Just as USA.gov and the four example state portals do, North Carolina must measure its progress in meeting the expectations of the public. A service like that used by USA.gov, the American Customer Satisfaction Index, should be considered. It provides benchmarking of satisfaction across state, federal, and corporate web portals. All three are necessary to judge whether public expectations are being met.

2. In addition to a statewide council, the state portal must be part of an organization dedicated to communicating state government information and services to the public.

The centralized information and service organization described above should own the state portal. It should reside in an agency with statewide scope that has a mission dedicated to information dissemination. There seem to be two choices. ITS and the CIO have not had a mission of providing information access to the public and, as a result, the state web portal has languished. However, that could be changed. ITS could adopt a role as statewide public information organizer. There would be the added benefit of the inherent technical talent at ITS that would make service access easier. The other option to house the new organization is the Department of Administration. It already has a strong public information role in the Agency for Public Telecommunications. In addition, DOA has statewide scope and is familiar with running statewide business applications.

But a single organization is not enough. If the organization is dedicated to public access to all state information and services it must have input from the central players in these areas. These

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[6] http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/documents/Federal_Web_Managers_WhitePaper.pdf
[7] http://egsc.usgs.gov/isb/pubs/ofrs/2004-1359/ofr2004-1359.pdf

should not be passive members. They should be members that provide active advice and services from their areas of expertise. The council should have members from at least the following:

- Information Technology Services – for hosting, telecommunication, web and transaction infrastructure, and call center needs. Also ITS would be critical for any centralized service offerings, including future authorization and authentication enhancements.
- Department of Health and Human Services – as the central location for most public services, DHHS would provide significant advice into the citizen outreach work.
- Department of Commerce – as the central location of business sector information and advocacy, Commerce is critical.
- Office of the Governor – as the executive policy lead for most of state government, the Office of the Governor is necessary for information and service publication.
- Council of State – the Governor does not control the entire executive branch. A rotating member from the other Council of State agencies is necessary for a full perspective.
- Department of Administration – should chair the council as owner of the new information and service organization.

In addition, a business unit workgroup, such as one representing agency Public Information Officers, and a technology unit workgroup, such as one representing agency Chief Information Officers, should be established to focus on their respective issues and bring results to the council.

3. Design of the state portal should reflect the organization of the state.

Section II of this report discussed three major types of web portal. The more consolidated approach saves resources and is more effective in general. However, the portal must reflect the organization it is representing. Resistance to consolidation due to organizational decentralization would easily lead to a disastrous portal. USA.gov is very highly rated but, for the most part, is a decentralized portal.

Given North Carolina's relative decentralization, the state should concentrate at first on developing a well done decentralized portal. A "search and transact" model is possible once infrastructure and working relationships are in place.

4. The state portal must have a full time staff and a budget.

OSBM recommends a staff of at least five full-time employees[8] to execute the day-to-day responsibilities for portal maintenance and development. Currently there are no dedicated personnel to the state portal. This number may be reduced somewhat if an outsourcing vendor is selected for these functions. Decision-making, approval and implementation duties should be clear. Issues should be handled within DOA, with guidance provided by the State Portal Advisory Council.

Funding is another major issue for the state portal. OSBM recommends a portal budget of at least $2 million[9] to provide the features and infrastructure required by the public. This compares

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[8] Based on research from Duke University's Terry Sanford School of Public Policy study in 2005 as described in section III.
[9] ibid.

to a 2009-10 portal budget of about $75,000.[10] These additional funds could come from one of or a combination of three sources:

- Direct appropriations.
- Savings from consolidating or reprioritizing funds from the previously discussed dissemination activities.
- Receipts from instituting a fee on an online service. The fee would be used to subsidize the portal and develop a statewide service and transaction infrastructure.

Outsourcing operations of the portal is often associated with the last option; however, it is not necessary to pursue this source. Exact FTE and fund requirements should be determined once a dedicated dissemination agency is established.

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[10] Although more is spent on the portal than this every year. ITS staff time brings the actual expenditures into the hundreds of thousands.