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10 great public-sector websites

These federal, state and local sites walk the walk of transparency

○ By **Rutrell Yasin**   ○ **Jan 14, 2011**

Government Web managers are getting the message: Great agency websites must be blazing fast and easy to navigate and offer access to information — including financial data, meeting transcripts and contracting records — not traditionally provided to the public.

In the past three years, GCN has recognized government websites that stood out from the rest of the pack in their uses and adaptations of new technologies.

Although speed and usability are critical, this last feature — delivering on the promise of transparency by serving data about how government operates and tax dollars are spent — sets this year's field of government websites apart.

Last year, we spotlighted innovative Web applications. In **2009**, we picked agencies that incorporated social networking with progressive uses of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. In **2008**, we noted agencies that were early adopters of the Web as their primary medium for interacting with constituents.

This year, the push for open government and information transparency has had a great influence on the design and features of public-sector websites. Many federal, state and municipal agencies have used the Web to open avenues for the public to track economic stimulus money and spending. How well agencies incorporated transparency was a major criteria for our choices this year. Accordingly, the use of data visualization, mapping and graphics, in addition to high-performance search and uses of social media and video, were strong factor's in this year's choices.

Although this is not a quantitative list — the field is way too broad to accurately measure — the following sites use technology and techniques in ways that bear that out.

Bay Bridge 360: Swaying the public interest

Keeping traffic flowing on one of the nation's busiest bridges — while simultaneously making the structure safe from earthquakes — demands new levels of innovation, not to mention public patience. The website **Bay Bridge 360** attends to both.

California.gov: A front door to state agencies

State officials have described **www.ca.gov** as a front door to all California state

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department websites. Additionally, there are links to location-based search, social media links and subscription feeds.

Census.gov: Measuring America
Census.gov contains a treasure trove of information about the changing population of the United States. It's interactive, multimedia features offers visitors the past and present of the U.S. population.

Albany, Ore.:
Minding the public purse
Officials in Albany, Ore., take the question "Where do my taxes go" seriously. They set up a page on the **cityofalbany.net website** to present the answers in a way that residents can easily understand.

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