SOUTH DAKOTA

BUREAU OF INFORMATION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS
DIGITAL SERVICES: GOVERNMENT TO CITIZEN
CITIZEN PORTAL PROJECT

March 2021
to present

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ONE STATE'S JOURNEY TO DIGITAL SERVICES FOR THEIR CITIZENS

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March 12, 2021

Dear Diary,

Today we had an emergency, all-day meeting at the Casey Tibbs Rodeo Center in Fort Pierre to discuss the $10M we just received from the legislature. The IT Modernization fund has two facets: do an assessment of our statewide ERP system and create a Citizen Portal. We were so fortunate to be ready when there was funding available!

The Citizen Portal had the potential to address many of the things our team wanted to address:
1. We need to flip the script. We want to think about the citizen experience on South Dakota's website, rather than how we do business internally.
2. We need a vision and a central platform to get everyone thinking and rowing the same direction.
3. We need to build trust so the rest of state government would follow us on this and other IT initiatives.

Since the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications (BIT) bills back our expenses to other state agencies, our internal customers, money is our roadblock. This $10M is a chance to build the foundation we need, but no customer wants to foot the bill. Centralized funding could finally give us a win. (Or possibly a huge loss.) What could go wrong? A lot, actually. Also, a lot of deep breathing and mindfulness practice is in my future!

We left today with a plan and a rallying cry: **citizen-first thinking**.

Now how are we going to get this work done? Details! *– Heather*

April 13, 2021

Dear Diary,

Jeff (Clines, our CIO) and Pat (Snow, CTO) presented the concept of the Citizen Portal to the Governor's Cabinet. No pressure, big room in the Governor's Mansion with the Governor, her staff and the head of every department hanging on your every word. (I was not sad to sit out that one.) Citizen-first thinking, mobile availability, eliminating printing, licking the envelope, mailing, paper cuts when opening the mail, typing in the data from forms, and cashing a check. Sounds like the Governor is onboard with all of it. They left the meeting excited for the citizen's experience when they visit South Dakota's website. *– hyp*
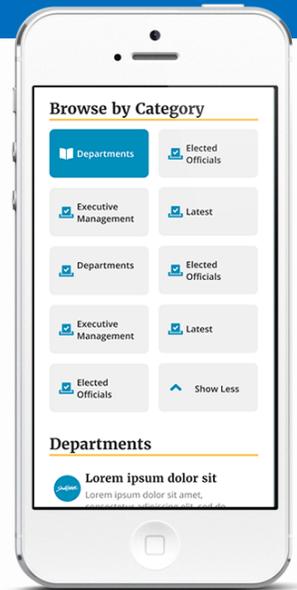
May 12, 2021

Dear Diary,

Today was kick-off day for the Governor's Citizen Portal. There were about 50 state government people waiting for the meeting to start. Some were not even sure why they were there. Others, like me, were wondering how we planned to pull off this vision for a better citizen experience on sd.gov, our state website. Servos, the vendor we have selected to help us implement on the ServiceNow platform, is helping to lay out the vision. The Governor came to the meeting and talked about the importance of meeting citizens where they are. She's always engaging, but you can tell she cares about this. I've been in meetings when she holds up her phone and asks if she can do whatever it is we're talking about with her phone. She always emphasizes being mobile-friendly to meet the citizen where they are. As a mother of three who owns several businesses, she understands how hard it is to make life happen. We have executive support for the project, which I am learning is a big deal in change management. Overall, this is what needs to happen for a successful launch:

1. **Executive Support.** To successfully launch the citizen portal, we needed vocal support from the Governor, the Governor's Office, and Cabinet members. We made presentations at Cabinet meetings and the Governor attended the citizen portal kick-off event.
2. **Agency Involvement.** We needed to have active contacts in each agency who could represent the citizen facing services in the organization and serve as an internal influencer. This meant more than having a few names to whom to send information. We asked a lot of these individuals, like providing a list of all citizen services and attending meetings to identify agency and citizen pain points.
3. **Citizen-First Thinking.** We needed agency representatives, those who were contacts and those involved with creating specific services, to be open to change. We were asking them to reconsider how they do business to make it easier for the citizen. This proved to be an on-going challenge.

It's hard to believe we started two months ago in this same inspiring room overlooking the Missouri River. Since then, we've interviewed project managers and RFP writers to help us with the project but didn't find anyone. In the end, we needed to build momentum, and quickly. So we focused on vendors who were already on a pre-negotiated National Association of State Procurement Officials ValuePoint contract. We had experience with Servos on an on-going project. *– hyp*

Workshops

May 19, 2021

Dear Diary,

Last week's kick-off helped me solidify some key messaging. Here's the language we'll repeat over and over to help everyone understand what we're doing and why.

1. Provide better customer service to the citizens of South Dakota

State government is universally about providing citizen services, and we have a lot of people across state government who take great pride in excellent customer service for their agency. There isn't a bigger vision of customer service from a statewide, agency agnostic perspective, though. A citizen shouldn't need to know which agency owns the process for which they're looking. For instance, license plates are managed by the Department of Revenue, and driver's licenses are managed by the Department of Public Safety. It was completely different in other states where I lived. Who ya gonna call? It isn't a criticism of state employees. They care about helping, and this will make it easier to do so.

The Citizen Portal will include centralized customer service for the first time. Citizens can chat with a live agent, email an agent for help, or call for assistance. It looks like a dynamic agent workspace we can use to more efficiently respond to citizen requests. Additionally, the search functions are targeted to agency websites, which provides better results than just a random google search might. This will help our citizens head straight to the answers they need, eliminating user frustration.

2. Create a centralized platform for digital services

The pandemic shone a light on our digital government shortcomings, as it did in many states. A 2018 review of digital services indicated we had 113 different places on state government websites where citizens would have to provide a different user name and password and 331 different services for which you could not pay online. We need to eliminate as many services as possible that require a citizen to print, fill out, and mail something to us. We can do so by using the ServiceNow platform, and it will have a streamlined look and feel from a single starting point for citizens.

3. Promote single sign-on

The Citizen Portal can help improve our security posture by proliferating single sign-on. We have a few services statewide already using single sign on, including those paying child support. The more people with MySD accounts, the more our agencies will see value in the consistency. - hyp
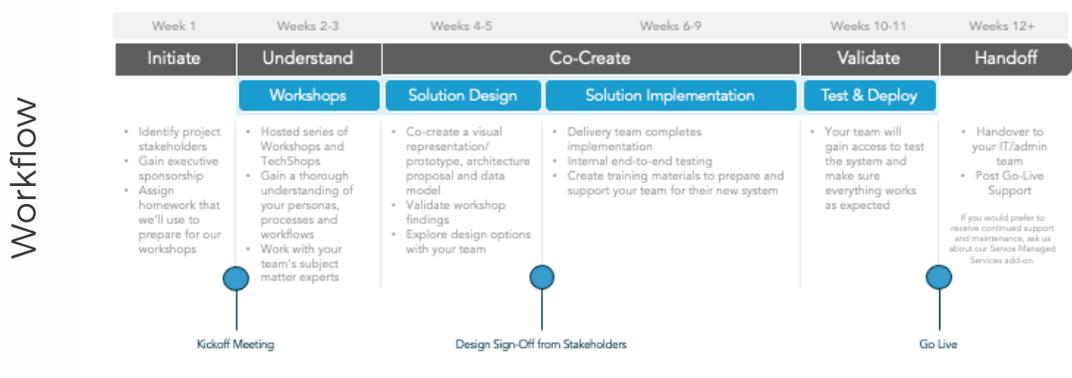
June 15, 2021

Dear Diary,

Today, there was a presentation about the findings from workshops Servos did with agency reps. There was an incredible amount of information. Our team was asked to stay away to make sure our customers, the agency representatives, could feel comfortable opening up. Perhaps the biggest takeaway was the lack of data! We can't easily identify our citizen-facing services or rank them in order of use. One attendee said, "70% of my job is looking for the right agency, department or person to forward a request submitted to my team." So much opportunity here! - hyp

July 6, 2021
Dear Diary,

Today was proof of vision day! After collecting information from agency contacts and the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications (BIT) team, we were able to see a possible mockup of the new sd.gov site. I'm excited about this because I know some people are still struggling to figure out what the Citizen Portal really is. It is a website. It is a customer service platform. It is not a plane. But it just may be superman. *– hyp*

July 28, 2021
Dear Diary,

We kicked off phase two today. Everyone has seen the proof of vision and can go out and touch, feel and see it. Something is real! It also seems like the real work for our agency reps and BIT team starts now. Agencies have homework to complete, and there are workshops to review the information with each agency. Let's see who does their homework. It might get sticky! *– hyp*

August 31, 2021
Dear Diary,

So, August has indeed been sticky. We've had a few agencies balk about the homework, which is basically identifying their citizen-facing services. I've spent time talking through the why again and reassured them that their list can be imperfect, like a work in progress. One agency has backed out altogether. I can't imagine how much harder this would have been if we didn't spend the last few months building understanding and buy-in. We're behind schedule as agencies postpone meetings to collect info, but there is some progress.

Simultaneous to the agency challenges, though, the Citizen Portal build has started. New features are added to the proof of vision almost weekly, including single sign on progress, live chat configurations, virtual agent conversations, and foundational service catalog configurations.

Often in state government, we're only able to make incremental IT changes as funding and human resources allow. This project engages all agencies together under Governor Noem's common vision. Standardization and centralization, in this case, was exactly the innovation South Dakota needed. That's rare and novel in our environment, despite the fact we've had centralized IT since 1996.I'm relieved to say no one is complaining about paying to build a foundation they can't yet see. *– hyp*

Most Popular Citizen Self-Service Topics

Service Portal KB Article Views

September 14, 2021
Dear Diary,

We launched phase two today. We'll start building content items, knowledge articles, and services into the portal. Thanks to the centralized funding, we're letting agencies self-select into this process. Working with the agency contacts, we prioritized citizen-facing work that could be completed in the three-month time frame before the scheduled initial launch (September – December). We want a wide range of agencies and services represented in the portal. The hardest part is going to be getting people to understand that they have to participate – regularly and thoroughly – for their service to go live. This is a traditional project management approach: initiation, planning, execution, control/monitor, and project closing. For many of our agency contacts, though, they have never had an IT process start and finish so quickly. We're going to have to focus on ensuring user acceptance testing is done. *– hyp*

October 1, 2021

Dear Diary,

Today I got the list of agency projects we are hoping will be on the portal when it goes live. Everything is color coded - identifying which ones were on track (green) and which were not (red). There is a whole lot of red. I think Citizen Portal fatigue has started, and I understand. The key word in statewide initiative is initiative, and this falls to many of the same people who do all of the work in agencies. Money is still a good motivator, though. The Department of Tribal Relations and the Department of Military don't regularly have funding for IT projects. Their teams have taken full advantage of the opportunities presented here. — hyp

November 1, 2021

Dear Diary,

We're getting ready to start training agency reps to enter knowledge articles, answer questions from citizens, and utilize their built-in services. It's starting to feel real, but my back is starting to hurt from dragging people toward the finish line! — hyp

November 23, 2021

Dear Diary,

I'm working from Indiana this week, so I won't have to take time off to be with my family for Thanksgiving. I wish I was in the office, though. Things are really hitting the fan. The Governor's Office would like the new sd.gov site to look less like a government website. It needs to be more flashy, but there are no specifics about what that means. We had an emergency meeting this afternoon, and there will be new designs for review by Monday. Our December 16 launch date may be in jeopardy. — hyp

"I think we are going to take the fax machines out back with a couple of sledge hammers now that we don't need them anymore."
–Stacy Watters, Office of the State Engineers

[View video testimonial here](#)

December 21, 2021

Dear Diary,

My Christmas miracle came today. A new design for the Citizen Portal has been approved by the Governor's Office. After a little holiday lull in the action and some rebuilding, we are scheduled to go live on January 26, 2022. More time for training can't hurt, unless they forget what they learned in November. — hyp

January 26, 2022

Dear Diary,

Today is a good day. Let's call it Citizen Portal Day. It's a soft launch, and we're getting feedback from state employees. The state's website at sd.gov had not been updated for more than a decade, so we moved some people's cheese. My optimism is buoyed (for the moment) by the progress we've made. We've built trust with our customers and demonstrated that IT projects no longer take years to develop an application from scratch. We can finish projects. They can see results quickly, which makes it easier to encourage future investment. We are already rebuilding two large applications into the ServiceNow platform, and our customers can now understand what it'll look like and why we would change the way we do business. There are so many people who helped get to today's launch. — hyp

Here is a general list by group:

Executive support – Change management models always emphasize the importance of executive support, and this project was successful because Governor Noem supported it. When agency contacts began to have citizen-portal fatigue, it was a nudge from the Governor's Office or Cabinet members that helped us push forward. Without these advocates at the top of the org chart, I doubt we would have launched the portal with 35 services built in the system.

Agency contacts – We needed the expertise of agency representatives who had a big-picture understanding of their agency's work and that of state government. We needed unicorns who knew who to contact to collect information, the influence to push action from others, and the understanding of the overall goal of the project. In many cases, we were lucky enough to find these tremendous assets.

Product owners – After the agency contacts helped identify the citizen-facing services within an agency, we needed the product owners to provide detailed information about business processes. We needed these individuals to be open to changing how they do business to drive efficiencies when possible. Also, it takes participation from subject-matter experts to test these new efficiencies. In most cases, our product owners were willing to change and encourage communication and testing to get the service completed and launched.

Vendors – We relied heavily on Servos to implement all phases of the citizen portal. They provided a framework, human resources, and expertise that made it possible to be ready to launch within six months of kicking off the effort. Additionally, we worked with Servos to get answers about product offerings and system updates from the ServiceNow team.

Internal BIT staff – While the development for the citizen portal was completed by the Servos team for the initial launch and the first few updates, the internal team needed to make decisions more quickly than usual to keep the project moving. Additionally, there was cheerleading, reminding, and cajoling of agency contacts to complete the work.

February 18, 2022

Dear Diary,

Today was the hard launch. We even had a press release from the Governor . Honestly, launch day was a huge success. There were no public facing issues. It was an after-Valentine's Day miracle. I did learn another great thing about the portal today from Pat, our CTO. Because the SD.Gov portal is based on the ServiceNow platform, we no longer needed the following technology stack for this purpose. (Yes, we will still have many of these things for other reasons.) – hyp
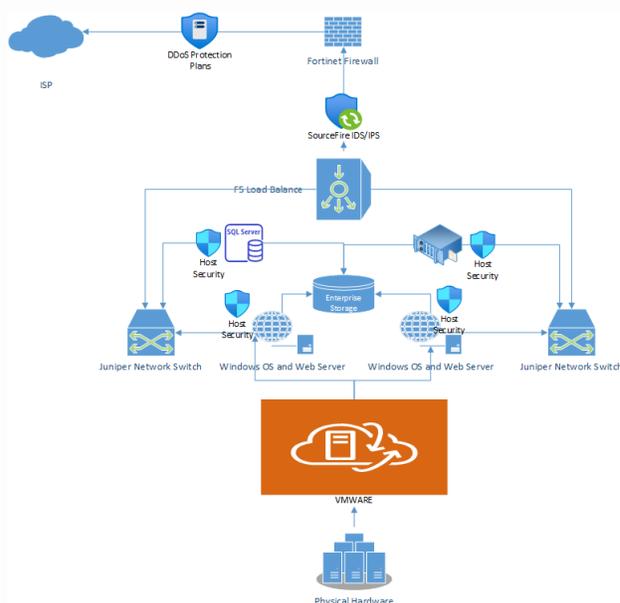
Technology Stack No Longer Utilized

- On premise hardware
- Virtualization/Hypervisor software
- Host Operating Systems
- Web Server Software
- Host based security
- Enterprise networking
- Enterprise storage
- SQL Servers
- Load Balancers
- Intrusion detection/protection systems
- Firewall(s)
- DDOS security protection

April 13, 2022

Dear Diary,

We had the opportunity to talk about the Citizen Portal at a ServiceNow regional states meeting. It was a lot of geek-speak, technical talk, but everyone loved it! Here's some of the finer points. (It is funnier if you imagine Will Ferrell in the movie Old School saying it really fast during the debate scene at the end....)

There are several foundational technical features that drive the sd.gov citizen portal. Centralized identity management is a key piece that drives the information and services provided to the citizen. Sd.gov uses a single sign on provider to allow the citizen to create and manage their system identity. Higher-level security, such as multi-factor identification and identity fraud protection, can be applied selectively to services that require stringent controls. Sd.gov is based on the ServiceNow platform which is designed specifically for the purpose of delivery of digital service through workflow and automation. Platform instances are housed in FedRAMP certified datacenters and take advantage of hyper scaling as loads increase. The data and configuration of the platform is near real time replicated to geo-diverse data centers and services can be run from either location instantly. More complex services take advantage of a business rules engine outside of the platform. This allows process owners to maintain and change decision tables outside of the platform without requiring code or platform changes. Data required for warehouse reporting is replicated to Azure data factory where analytical tools, such as PowerBI, can be used for reporting.

April 27, 2022

Dear Diary,

Today was our monthly update, and we launched two great services. The Office of the State Engineer had been receiving bids – I mean lots and lots of bids – in the mail. It is now digitized. They believe they will get more bids because the process is easier. This should bring costs down and save the state money. It will also be easier for their team, and they work hard over there! Also, the South Dakota Historical Society launched an inquiry form, which will help genealogists and others request info online. They seemed really pleased to be able to support their citizens so efficiently. They are librarian types, so they were quietly pleased. – hyp

May 24, 2022

Dear Diary,

I was asked to pull together information for the Citizen Portal for a NASCIO award, and I never thought we would have so much to share in such a short time. Seems I left out the data in my diary. (I should have learned that from the Bridget Jones books since she listed her daily weight and all.) Here is an overview. There are about 880,000 people in South Dakota, so we are thrilled with these numbers! – hyp

We'll kick off the second year of the project on June 9, 2022, with Governor Noem and all of the agency contacts. We'll share updates about recently launched services that can be utilized by any agency initiating a project, like content management and credit card processing. With more than half of the original IT modernization funds already spent, we'll require agencies to pay for 50% of future projects. This will make the funding last as long as possible. Upcoming projects include adding the South Dakota Retirement System website, driver's license renewal, and launching a new look for requesting unemployment insurance. The modernization fund will continue to cover licensing costs until at least July 2023, and we'll request additional funds next legislative session. We're working with the Bureau of Finance and Management to add the licensing costs to agency budgets. Also, several members of the BIT development team are working closely with our vendor, Servos, to become proficient in ServiceNow. By January 2023, we should be able to maintain existing services in the Citizen Portal, and design and build services without vendor assistance, except when needed.

We're providing more sustainable digital citizen services than ever before. The foundation we've built for the Citizen Portal will make adding services faster. It'll also be less expensive with every additional service. We're helping people, modernizing our state infrastructure, and improving customer service. It is an exciting time, and we can ride this momentum to improve other IT functions throughout state government here in South Dakota.