

2012 Best of the Web Award Winners Announced

Noelle Knell | August 23, 2012



The 2012 Best of the Web awards, a joint endeavor of *Government Technology* and the Center for Digital Government, were announced Thursday, Aug. 23. First place winners are the state of Alabama, Orange County, Fla., and Louisville, Ky. [A complete list of winners is below.](#)

Best of the Web honors governments whose websites demonstrate innovation, usability and maximum functionality for users. Best of the Web honorees have sites that also contribute to governmental efficiency by contributing to effective service delivery. Submissions from U.S. cities, counties and states were judged by executives from the Center for Digital Government, along with a panel of past Best of the Web winners.

Louisville, Ky.



[Louisville, Ky.](#) has ranked near the top of the pack with Best of the Web judges for the past several years, and a quick trip to its site provides ample evidence for the No. 1 distinction among cities in 2012.

An abundance of well organized information is framed by numerous ways to connect with city government in Louisville. The Web team closely tracks site analytics and focuses on keeping sought-after content up to date and easily accessible. A deep team of 140 content editors contributes to the site's consistent ranking as the No. 1 resource on Louisville, according to search engines.

Demonstrating the metro government's commitment to engaging with its citizens is an active social media center, with links to multiple Twitter accounts, Facebook pages, RSS feeds, YouTube channels and more. Mayor Greg Fischer's twice yearly virtual "Talk to Greg" meetings conducted over Twitter and Facebook spark lively interactions on a broad range of topics, and prove that City leadership talks the talk when it comes to direct citizen interaction.

CIO [Beth Niblock](#) reveals that Louisville's addition this year of geospatial data through its "QuickFind" and "Map It" features is proving popular with site visitors. "It's an innovative way to allow citizens to find the most popular services and locations for government using a familiar mapping tool," Niblock said. The feature allows residents to plug in their address, and access specific city service information such as garbage pickup days, metro council district information and crime data. Integrated with the mapping features are sign-up options for alerts on roughly 400 city topics. The city boasts 90,000 digital subscribers to its notification service.

Among the many mobile apps available to Louisville residents is the recently launched 311 app, which ties into its 24/7 311 call center. Operators are trained to direct callers to the website when possible to effectively help address inquiries.

"We have people who are really committed to the social media platforms for giving us feedback, and then there are other people who will fill out a Web form, or they'll call 311," Niblock said. "No matter where you are, we have a way for the citizen to give us feedback."

Orange County, Fla.



The home page of [Orange County, Fla.](#), features rotating images showing off some of the county's most visually appealing landmarks. The site recently underwent a major redesign, launching in April.

Behind the updated look and feel is a completely reorganized website, resulting from a thorough review of more than 5,000 pages of content. CIO [Rafael Mena](#) explained that the first priority for the new website was a layout that was as intuitive as possible to citizens.

Staff completed the site's technical development in-house, evaluating analytics to help establish a new topic-oriented taxonomy featuring 18 blended service areas. "We had

to make it easy for visitors to find information without having to know anything about the way we are organized,” Mena said.

“Content is now presented how it would logically be consumed by a citizen, regardless of the individual department or division that provides it,” he added.

Their efforts are reaping many rewards. Feedback on the new website, launched in April, has been overwhelmingly positive. The new site is helping to save citizens time and increasing government efficiency. Streamlined processes and online self-service offerings are saving trips to government offices and therefore saving employee time too.

Improved browse-and-search capabilities now are offered on Orange County’s website. Real-time services displayed on the site include information on active fire rescue operations, lost and available pets, and current county inmates. Online permitting and utility bill payment also are available.

A live chat option accessible from the site during regular business hours is integrated with the county’s 311 service. Registration for emergency alerts is available through the County’s Emergency Services office. Current weather information and a hurricane guide are linked directly from the home page as well.

According to Mena, Spanish translation of the full Orange County site is now under way. Currently in quality control mode, the option is expected to go live within the next few weeks.

Alabama



Alabama’s state portal has undergone a complete overhaul, and now features a simplified design, user-friendly navigation and an impressive collection of online services. Site traffic is on the upswing, averaging more than 94,000 unique visitors per month between April 2011 and March 2012, an increase of 14 percent over the previous year.

“Users should be able to easily navigate around the site without guesswork or confusion, never feeling overwhelmed by the amount of content on the screen,” said state CIO Jack Doane.

Rotating stats on the site’s home page reveal details about the number of Alabamans going online to purchase a vehicle title record, send money to an inmate, buy a hunting and fishing license, renew a professional license and much more. This addition is helping the state bring public awareness to the 150 online services it provides, while a direct link to each service embedded in each statistic promises to drive usage up even further.

Alabama also offers a live chat option, online and via text. Contest judges noted Alabama's leadership in disaster recovery as well, as the state has not one, but two active backup sites should the main website go down.

The site has been mobile optimized, and features robust emergency information with access to alert sign-ups available within one click of the home page. Interactive statewide maps offer many options for customization. Visitors can look at a map, for example, with Alabama moon trees — trees grown from 500 seeds taken into orbit around the Moon — libraries and public fishing lakes highlighted. Secondary pages throughout the site are peppered with interesting state facts and photos.

Opportunities to connect using the Alabama website are many. A flagged social media portal is prominent, featuring links to RSS feeds, Twitter pages, Facebook pages and more from elected officials and state representatives, and several state agencies. Dedicated kids' pages promote education about the state with resources for students and teachers.

According to Doane, feedback on the redesigned website indicates a successful effort. One site visitor reports using the site as inspiration for their own online presence: "...It's inviting, intuitive, aesthetically pleasing and really, just brilliant."

2012 Best of the Web Awards

State Portal Category:

- 1st Place: [Alabama](#)
- 2nd Place: [California](#)
- 3rd Place: [Utah](#)
- 4th Place: [Rhode Island](#)
- 5th Place: [Mississippi](#)

Finalists:

- [Maine](#)
- [Michigan](#)
- [Nebraska](#)
- [Texas](#)
- [Virginia](#)

County Portal Category:

- 1st Place: [Orange County, Fla.](#)
- 2nd Place: [Pinellas County, Fla.](#)
- 3rd Place: [Alameda County, Calif.](#)
- 4th Place: [Miami-Dade County, Fla.](#)
- 5th Place: [Chesterfield County, Va.](#)

Finalists:

- [Baltimore County, Md.](#)
- [Maui County, Hawaii](#)
- [Sacramento County, Calif.](#)
- [Glynn County, Ga.](#)
- [Martin County, Fla.](#)
- [Monroe County, N.Y.](#)
- [Roanoke County, Va.](#)

City Portal Category:

- 1st Place: [Louisville Metro Government, Ky.](#)
- 2nd Place: [Arvada, Colo.](#)
- 3rd Place: [Raleigh, N.C.](#)
- 4th Place: [Riverside, Calif.](#)
- 5th Place: [Austin, Texas](#)

Finalists:

- [Chandler, Ariz.](#)
- [Danville, Va.](#)
- [Independence, Mo.](#)
- [Lakewood, Colo.](#)
- [Tampa, Fla.](#)

<http://www.govtech.com/e-government/2012-Best-of-the-Web-Award-Winners-Announced.html>