

**State of Washington  
Department of General Administration  
Office of State Procurement (OSP)**

**Cronin IT Award 2005**



**Washington's Electronic Business Solution  
(WEBS)**

**Implementation Date: September 2004**

**People Responsible for Implementation:**

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## **Washington's Electronic Business Solution (WEBS)**

### **Background**

Within the State of Washington, thousands of bid and proposal opportunities for goods and services occur every year. This activity is decentralized among the different government organizations with no single place for vendors to access these opportunities. This environment makes it very difficult for vendors seeking business opportunities due to the numerous vendor registration and notification methods. Vendors are required to navigate a myriad of registration systems and formats throughout state and local government. The different methods were perceived by many vendors as being unfair and with each government organization taking a different approach it is extremely difficult for vendors to know the variety of requirements.

Further, each of the purchasing entities maintains their own vendor databases with duplicative, inaccurate or outdated information. The Office of State Procurement database alone had 11,500 registered vendors with only 3,000 vendors considered active.

With each government organization employing their own unique approach there is little opportunity to share bid information or to partner with other purchasing entities. As a result, the State of Washington as a whole spends a significant amount of money and resources to identify vendors and inform them of bidding opportunities. Additionally, this approach does not optimize the competition and may result in higher prices and/or less value to the State of Washington.

### **Approach**

Through stakeholder work with the vendor community and government purchasing entities, The Office of State Procurement (OSP) determined it was in the best interest of the state to consolidate vendor registration, bid posting and bid notification to a single statewide portal. The Office of State Procurement took the lead in the project but had significant involvement from the various state and local purchasing entities.

A team was formed to identify the requirements of the new vendor registration, bid posting and bid notification system. With the intent of providing a single place for vendors to access business opportunities for the State of Washington the system was named Washington's Electronic Business Solution (WEBS).

The requirements for WEBS include:

- Accessible to all vendors and government entities via the Internet
- Easy to use and requires minimum training and support
- Highly flexible and easy to maintain
- Vendors self register and maintain their own vendor profile
- Vendors identify geographic locations and commodity categories for notification of opportunities
- Capture of socio-economic data to assist with vendor access and outreach
- Commodity search functionality that is easy to use and manage
- Email notification to vendors when an opportunity is posted to system
- Easy and flexible method for selecting vendors for notification of opportunities
- Ability for government entities to post bid and amendment documents
- Ability for government entities to track vendors who download bid documents
- Ability to record responded and awarded vendors and notify vendors via email
- Secure access that meets State of Washington security requirements
- System meets the states archiving requirements (6 years data access online)

- Robust reporting capabilities
- Requires no software to be download and all data processing occurs at the application server
- Supports Internet Explorer and Netscape browsers
- System available 7 x 24 and Customer Service provided during normal business hours

It is estimated WEBS will be adopted by 200+ government organizations and 50,000 vendors will register with the State of Washington through WEBS. The system is capable of supporting 1,000+ unique bidding opportunities per month and 10,000 documents downloaded per month.

## **Results**

### **Successful consolidation of vendor registration to a single statewide portal and improved access to government as measured by the number of vendor registrations, bid postings and vendor bid responses.**

The vendor registration module was implemented in November of 2002 ([www.ga.wa.gov/webs](http://www.ga.wa.gov/webs)). To date 8,100 vendors are registered with an average of 375 new vendors registering each month. Vendor self-registration has been very successful for the State of Washington. The Office of State Procurement saves an average of 10 minutes per vendor registration equating to 1,350 resource hours saved since inception of online vendor registration. An additional 320 resource hours per year were saved with the elimination of managing email and postal mail notifications rejects.

Feedback from the vendor community has been positive and indicates cost and time savings for them as well. Through WEBS vendors have eliminated the need for multiple registrations, increased their access to bidding opportunities and reduced time associated with obtaining a bid document as they are immediately available in WEBS at time of notification.

Other benefits that are not easily to measure but are equally important are:

- Improved access for small, minority and women owned businesses
- Improved visibility for vendors to a greater number of purchasing offices
- Better understanding of what government is purchasing

Government organizations began using WEBS to post their bid opportunities and notify vendors in September of 2004. To date 278 bids from 87 government organizations have been posted in WEBS for goods, services, and construction projects. Additionally, 33,507 notifications have been sent to WEBS vendors and an average of 1,400 bid downloads occur each month.

The WEBS project has successfully combined the numerous state and local government's procurement activities with the vendor community in one single portal reducing the barriers to participate in the government purchasing process.

The WEBS system is estimated to save The Office of State Procurement 1,070 resources hours per year and provided savings to other government organizations by:

- Eliminate management of vendor lists by each government entity
- Increase competition in the bidding process reducing the cost of goods and services for them
- Reduce or eliminate advertising costs
- Streamline posting, mailing and other business processes

The process to post a bid in WEBS and notify a list of vendors averages less than 10 minutes. For most of the WEBS government users this represents a significant time savings compared to their other processes. The Office of State Procurement was able to reduce the bid posting time from 2 hours, a 92% reduction in resource hours.

## **Cronin Criteria**

### **Innovation (Uniqueness or originality of innovation)**

- Single statewide portal for vendor registration
- Common system for state and local governments to access vendor lists, post bids and notify vendor community
- Highly flexible to meet the multitude of procurement rules and regulations across many government organizations
- Capturing of detailed socio-economic data providing opportunity for improved/increased access and outreach to small, minority, woman or disadvantaged businesses
- Shared environment to allow state and local government entities to partner on bidding opportunities fully utilizing their buying power
- Improved communications to vendor community through use of technology

### **Transferability**

This model would work well in many states. The flexibility of the application provides for an easily customizable online tool. The software developed for the Office of State Procurement by NovuSolutions is now available for purchase directly from NovuSolutions by other purchasing entities. The single portal is a very viable solution for other government entities that are looking to improve access to bidding opportunities for the vendor community, increase their socio-economic goals and reduce the costs associated with the bidding process.

### **Service Improvement**

- Increased vendor access to government bidding opportunities
- Level playing field for small, minority, woman and disadvantaged businesses
- Reduce vendor costs and time associated with registering in multiple government systems or entities
- Reduce government costs associated with vendor maintenance, bid posting and vendor notifications

### **Potential for Demonstrated Cost Reduction**

As project lead the Department of General Administration funded the development, implementation and maintenance of WEBS. This saved a significant amount of money for government organizations by eliminating the need to develop and maintain their own system.

Policy changes within the State of Washington have eliminated a previous requirement to advertise all bids in the newspaper or trade magazines if the bid opportunity is posted through the WEBS system. This change will save state government a significant amount of money spent on advertising and is a catalyst for change in the local governments as well.

The system is available at no cost to the vendors or government organizations.

### **Invitation to Cronin Awards Committee**

Please contact Kathy Costello at [kcostel@ga.wa.gov](mailto:kcostel@ga.wa.gov) or 360-902-7294 to learn more about our WEBS system and successes.