



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

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2013

Status:

Laureate

Organization Name:

U.S. Dept. of State

Organization URL:

<http://www.state.gov/m/irm/ediplomacy/index.htm>

Project Name:

Office of eDiplomacy

Please select the category in which you are submitting your entry.

Collaboration

Please provide an overview of the nominated project. Describe the problem it was intended to solve, the technology or approach used, how it was innovative and any technical or other challenges that had to be overcome for successful implementation and adoption. (In 300 words or less.)

The Office of eDiplomacy of the Bureau of Information Resource Management of the State Department was established in 2003 as an office to overcome knowledge barriers and improve State's ability to communicate and share knowledge. eDiplomacy's Knowledge Leadership (KL) initiative innovates and promotes knowledge management and collaboration technologies to serve foreign affairs goals. Internal and external innovations draw expertise, experience and knowledge of key constituencies into a new way of connecting. Products such as the Diplopedia wiki, Communities@State blogs, the Corridor internal professional networking platform and Search have created a framework and tools for a unified, versatile global collaboration environment. Users and interagency

partners share knowledge across organizational and geographic boundaries every day. Tech@State conferences, overseas TechCamp training events, and the Virtual Student Foreign Service channel cooperation and collaboration among myriad stakeholders, bringing together technologists, academics and students, diplomats, policymakers, aid workers and civil society organizations. In terms of challenges, earlier State attempts at using commercially supplied and custom approaches at knowledge management failed, and eDiplomacy developed its own intranet tools for the KL initiative. The office broke with norms and procedures of an organization more oriented toward vertical rather than horizontal communication. In establishing a platform for Communities@State in 2005, Diplopedia in 2006, and Corridor in 2010, the office confronted security, privacy and other issues. The office worked closely with other offices to develop policies to allay management concerns, and addressed network and risk management issues involved in adapting open source platforms for use on enterprise servers.

When was this project implemented or last updated? (Please specify month and year.) Has it incorporated new technologies and/or other innovations since its initial deployment? (In 300 words or less.)

eDiplomacy KL tools have been updated on an ongoing basis to enhance technical functionality, ease of use, and responsiveness to the needs of the State Department. Corridor: In May, 2011 eDiplomacy rolled out Corridor, an open source-based internal networking platform that helps personnel on State's 60,000+ user unclassified intranet connect and work together worldwide. More than 11,000 Corridor members publish credentials, find expertise, let others know what they're working on and form groups based on interests, work and perspectives. In June 2012 Corridor added the ability to post photos and sort by activity streams, and in December added the ability for users to conduct polls. Search: In May 2012 SearchState, the agency's enterprise search tool engineered by eDiplomacy, deployed the ability to save searches (search agents) and has been revamping the user interface for advanced search filters. Analytics: Use of open source software that supports the eDiplomacy Analytics project was approved in July 2012, and eDiplomacy moved from a manual analytics process to one that allows KL teams to gather and analyze quantitative data about use of KL programs to measure levels of activity and, importantly, provide a global picture of which users are reading, contributing to and collaborating on the programs. The information will help eDiplomacy to develop plans and policies to promote the widespread and effective use of knowledge management practices within the Department. The Current: In 2012, responding to senior management, eDiplomacy developed a new information aggregation/discussion platform for State users to aggregate and personalize internal and external news and info sources into a single site, and open discussions on this information on other KL tools such as Corridor and Communities. The office received approval in July

2012 to launch the pilot, currently in beta testing.

If this is a previously submitted project that has been significantly updated and/or expanded, please describe the nature of the update here. (In 300 words or less.)

eDiplomacy's work has moved forward significantly since this project was submitted a year ago. In addition to improvements in the KL tools, programs for external collaboration – TechCamps, Tech@State and the Virtual Student Foreign Service (VSFS) – have continued to grow. eDiplomacy's Tech@State conferences bring together technologists, government personnel, academics, entrepreneurs, and others to explore tech solutions that help achieve U.S. diplomacy and development goals. They have brought in thousands of participants since the project's inception, and carried out three well-attended conferences in 2012. eDiplomacy partnered with the Wikimedia Foundation in July 2012 and conducted a Tech@State conference on wikis in the public sector as part of Wikimania 2013, held this year in Washington, D.C. The Tech@State conference Real-Time Awareness in February included FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, and the Election Technologies conference in November included a panel nicknamed on the Twittersphere the "political tech nerd dream team," including digital directors from the Obama and Romney campaigns and senior representatives from Google, Facebook, and Twitter. Overseas TechCamps – two-day events bringing together U.S. officials, NGOs and technologists with local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for practical guidance and training on innovative, low-cost, easy-to-use technologies – doubled from 5 in 2011 to 10 in 2012, and in 2012 spanned the globe from Bangkok to Zanzibar to Lima. The VSFS online "eInternship" program grew to 343 U.S. college students working on 190 projects worldwide in 2012 from 209 students working on 121 projects in 2011. In November 2011, eDiplomacy extended the VSFS to include an online "microtasking" platform, which allows students to respond to brief, discrete taskings from overseas posts and domestic offices. Thus far 75 challenges have been posted by 100 employees, and 342 students have volunteered to respond to them.

Is implementation of the project complete? If no, please describe the project's phases and which phase the project is now in. (In 300 words or less.)

Viewing the evolution of the Office of eDiplomacy since its launch in 2002, it has moved from the phase of piloting new platforms for collaboration and knowledge management, to refining and improving these platforms, while continuing to seek new opportunities and innovations to fulfill its mission. In the past two years the office has also reached out well beyond the internal boundaries of the State Department to partner with a range of stakeholders on technology, social media

and collaboration issues. Engagement with State Department staff is also an important priority at present, to increase understanding and adoption of both internal and external collaboration tools. eDiplomacy envisions these endeavors shaping knowledge leadership and collaboration as continuing in the years ahead, and is working with other offices to create a next-generation IT organization, with the IRM becoming a true collaborator with other bureaus, missions and agencies to advance diplomacy by providing effective knowledge-sharing initiatives and guidance on the convergence of technology and diplomacy.

Please provide at least one example of how the technology project has benefited a specific individual or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work. (In 300 words or less.)

As a model of responsiveness to agency needs, operating at low cost, the output of the office has grown. Senior officials extol eDiplomacy's leadership for rapid response to last-minute, high-level taskings. There are several examples of the internal and external impact of eDiplomacy's projects. Department employees use Corridor as an enterprise-wide expertise exchange – for example, the office that manages the Department's official messaging system uses Corridor group to convey updates and field questions from users. Creation of another Corridor group helped some employees win accreditation from the Department as an officially recognized affinity group. eDiplomacy stood up new online communities in 2012 to support the Secretary's Economic Statecraft initiative, has worked with the Bureau of Democracy and Human Rights to establish new tools and platforms for its internal management and reports, and has worked with many parts of the Foreign Service Institute to facilitate training. TechCamps have uniformly received substantial praise from participants. An NGO participant in TechCamp Bucharest in December 2011 said, "I changed entirely my perspective on how to deal with the problems existing within the communities by using technology." The World Bank pointed to TechCamp Chisinau in 2011 as the primary driver of new local interest in open data. A December 2011 World Bank Report said the TechCamp event was the first time that Moldovan government, technologists and civil society participants had collaborated together.

Would this project be considered an innovation, a best practice or other notable advancement that could be adopted by or tailored for other organizations and uses? If yes, please describe that here. (In 300 words or less.)

eDiplomacy has both launched several innovations and gathered several others under its roof, improved them, adapted them to agency conditions, and promoted them as models to other organizations. The office has been recognized by State inspectors and others as a model of responsiveness to agency needs, operating at low cost. Creating a dedicated office with a specific mission to expand knowledge sharing has provided continuity of effort, brand recognition, and a resource for innovators. eDiplomacy blends Foreign Service, Civil Service and contract professionals and specialists to bridge the gap between IT professionals and diplomats, analysts and non-technical managers who conduct the Department's business. While fostering innovation, eDiplomacy has kept a focus on the practical, day-to-day business needs of State employees. A key to success, which could be considered a "best practice," has been the ability to create accessible but simple tools and concepts, and then use user feedback and experience to build them out. As it is not mandatory for any Department employee to use eDiplomacy's KM tools, the proof of the success of the tools also can be measured simply in their use per the statistics cited earlier. State has put its experience and lessons learned on knowledge management at the disposal of more than 50 federal agencies, foreign governments, private sector entities and non-governmental organizations. Craigslist founder, Craig Newmark, said that "Richard Boly's team in eDiplomacy is transforming how government accomplishes its mission. I often steer other government agencies to eDiplomacy to learn innovative solutions to old challenges."

If there are any other details that the judges should know about this project, please note them here. (In 300 words or less)

In a major report on eDiplomacy efforts at State (<http://goo.gl/gbZg4>), Fergus Hanson of the Lowy Institute for International Policy, seconded to Brookings, called eDiplomacy "the most dynamic arm of a foreign ministry you are likely to find anywhere." eDiplomacy and staff members have consistently been recognized for innovative leadership in government: The KL Program was selected as one of the "Top 50" programs for the 2009 Innovations in American Government Awards competition sponsored by the Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation (<http://ashinstitute.harvard.edu/>). The Innovations in American Government Awards promotes federal, state, and local government innovations. eDiplomacy KL Division Dep. Chief Tiffany Smith received the 2010 NextGov Award for innovation, especially for her work on launching the VSFS. Office Director Richard Boly was a finalist in the 2012 Service to America Awards:



<http://goo.gl/gHHN8>. Four eDiplomacy employees have been recognized by Federal Computer Week as "Rising Stars," in 2011 and 2012, and the TechCamps project manager was chosen as one of the FCW Fed 100 in 2012: <http://goo.gl/f70U7>. Boly was named on November 27, 2012 one of FierceGovernment's Fierce 15: <http://goo.gl/tAjud>. eDiplomacy was one of InformationWeek's Top 15 Government IT Innovators for 2012: <http://bit.ly/Thl5Q1>. eDiplomacy was a Semi-Finalist in the Constellation Research Group SuperNova Awards 2012: <http://goo.gl/iz65E>. eDiplomacy was just named a Finalist in the American Council for Technology-Industry Advisory Council Excellence.gov Awards, in the category of Digital Government: <http://goo.gl/MJVsN>.