

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Prototype Demonstrates Business Service Improvements

Albany, NY - The New York State Center for Technology in Government (CTG) today released a report showing how New York State can offer business entrepreneurs faster and more consistent service through the Business Permits Assistance Program at the Governor's Office of Regulatory Reform (formerly the Office for Regulatory and Management Assistance). The CTG project tested and evaluated a prototype voice response information system to provide business permit information, referrals, and other advice to callers who want to start or expand a business in New York State. The public-private-university partnership project involved agency staff, University at Albany faculty and graduate students, and a corporate partner, Precision Systems, Inc.

The current system, which relies on human operators, is available only during business hours and is so overloaded that only about two calls in ten are answered on the first try. The project re-engineered the Permit Assistance Program and created an experimental system which allowed callers to access a database containing information about more than 1200 permits 24 hours a day. Callers could either respond to simple questions with spoken answers, or indicate their choices by using a touch tone telephone. The information they needed was provided by both recorded messages and fax-back of printed information.

The cost-benefit evaluation of the project showed the agency how to make maximum use of various features of the prototype system and how to deploy both technology and staff resources for the best return on investment under different operating conditions. Thomas Carroll, Deputy Director for Regulatory Reform said, "this project lays a foundation for a wide variety of improvements in our Permit Assistance Program. We are already implementing some of the features of the prototype system to improve efficiency and customer service."

The project illustrates how the Center for Technology in Government can improve government operations. "By offering government agencies the ability to test leading edge technology on practical problems, the Center helps the state offer better service at lower cost," said Sharon Dawes, Director of CTG. "Any agency which processes applications, claims, or other similar transactions could use voice response technology to its advantage. The Business Permits prototype demonstrated the feasibility of this technology and produced guidelines to help agencies decide when and where it can be used effectively."

The Center for Technology in Government was established in 1993 to create an ongoing capacity to conduct public sector research and demonstration projects that could benefit the entire state. CTG projects are competitively selected and offer, at no cost to the participating agencies, a package of services including professional project management, the products and services of corporate partners, expertise of University at Albany faculty and graduate students, and a state-of-the-art computing and communications lab. The Center is currently conducting several other projects which focus on land use decisions, Internet resources, decision-making in emergency rooms, and a statewide geographic data cooperative.