

A. **2011 Michigan NASCIO Award Nomination DRAFT**  
**MEDC Project Map Website**

(<http://www.michiganadvantage.org/Projects/> )

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**MEDC Project Website Development Team:**

**Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC):**

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Kevin White, Web Developer

**Center for Shared Solutions (CSS):**

Eric Swanson, Director; Center for Shared Solutions and Technology Partnerships

**IDV Solutions (<http://www.idvsolutions.com>)**

Richard Whisner, Solution Architect

**NASCIO Category:**

**Open Government Initiatives:** *“This category addresses efforts to make government more transparent and accountable and to stimulate civic engagement.”*  
It includes initiatives such as: *“Transparency websites related to budget spending, financial reporting and stimulus tracking.”*

**Previous NASCIO Nomination:**

None

**Previous Recognition:**

Cited as exemplary in “Show us the Subsidies” by the Good Jobs First organization, a national policy resource group.( <http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/> )

## **B. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Tough fiscal decisions require that every dollar be scrutinized for maximum return. Citizens across Michigan and across the country are demanding increased transparency regarding every aspect of government spending. Meanwhile, state governments are battling for the favor of business and industry in an “economic war among the states.” The prize is jobs and prosperity, measured in quality of life and the well-being of citizens.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Project Map Website encourages business, improves government, and stretches funding, while providing unprecedented transparency to constituents. At the same time, the innovative integration of a map interface with database searching, sorting, and reporting, offers a model for other agencies or states to inexpensively, clearly, and coherently present data to the public.

The site signals a turning point in the institution of open government practices. Improving the quality and continuous flow of data, information is rendered in a way that is both more meaningful and more practical than the reams of abstract figures featured in more traditional, "on request," FOIA-based open government.

MEDC projects include aggressive economic gardening and business attraction efforts to grow businesses and create jobs. For years, the MEDC struggled with annual paper disclosures of these economic gardening and business attraction deals. Such information could be particularly valuable to state legislators formulating and fine-tuning laws to help the economy—if they had better access to the data. For citizens interested in tracking or participating in the process, availability was nearly non-existent.

To remedy these issues, in April of 2010 the MEDC launched the first-of-its-kind Project Map Website, leading the way for others and marking a huge advance for proponents of greater access to government data and dealings. On this site, anyone can quickly and easily obtain project information through an interactive map interface providing intuitive zooming, panning, and clicking functions that let users “drill down” to whatever degree is desired. The map itself renders both location and project type information in a way that is visually simple to grasp even at higher levels, while clicking on individual projects yields specific details such as investment amounts, expected job and wage figures, and address information. In addition, by clicking a few checkboxes, customized reports can be tailor-made for on-screen viewing or output in PDF format.

In March of 2011, the first update added new search functions and 2010 data. Another update in a month or two will offer "real time" data availability by linking to MEDC's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database to provide year-to-date information.

The resulting transparency tool is as fast and fun to use as it was easy and inexpensive to implement. Completed in only two months, start-to-finish, at a total initial cost of just \$35,000, the project is a remarkable example of efficiency and cost effectiveness. It will yield a projected 2:1 ROI with over \$75,000 in annual savings. Besides promoting MEDC's programs that stimulated over half a million expected jobs and \$15.5 billion of private investment in the past two years, the Project Map Website opens the gates of government, encouraging engagement, strengthening trust, and unlocking better understanding for all.

## C. Description

**Business Problem:** Citizens across the state of Michigan and across the country are demanding increased transparency regarding every aspect of government spending. Meanwhile, state governments are battling for the favor of business and industry in an “economic war among the states.” The prize is jobs and prosperity, measured in quality of life and the well-being of citizens.

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**Constituent Demand for Clarity:** In the first quarter of 2010, US PIRG: The Federation of State Public Interest Research Groups, rated states on their spending transparency to citizens. Michigan found itself classed with 13 other Lagging States which received a rating of “F” for their lack of transparency-related websites. That situation would soon change.

Just a few months later, a different study of state government transparency ranked Michigan as the seventh best in the nation and cited the MEDC’s interactive map website as exemplary. “Show Us the Subsidies” by the Good Jobs First organization, a national policy resource group, noted:

“Of the 104 programs with disclosure, 50 in 25 states provide a general location only and 30 in 15 states give an exact street address for subsidized facilities. We found one state – Michigan – that uses an interactive map to show the locations of subsidized projects and to describe them. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation website allows users to map subsidy use by type or industry. Project details included in the map display the number of jobs created, the facility address, and a link to project summaries.”

**A Smart, Strategic and Open Solution:** In March of 2011, the first update added new search functions and 2010 data. Another update in a month or two will offer “real time” data availability by linking to MEDC’s Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database to provide year-to-date information.

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## D. SIGNIFICANCE

### 1 - Goals, Strategy and Value

**Contributing to high-level state strategy,** the site promotes executive and agency initiatives. Transparency and accountability is a recurring theme that Governor Snyder has championed both before and after his election. The governor unveiled a citizen's guide to

Michigan's financial health in late January, while voicing his commitment to transparency -- putting the facts in plain terms, making them easy to understand. He has emphasized providing services to local governments as well.

The MEDC's current strategic plan also includes transparency as a core value. The measures for achieving transparency are interwoven throughout the strategic plan and integrated in the metrics being used to gauge success. The project mapping tool is an important part of those efforts, and a vital step in an overall engagement strategy

**Promoting program goals** is another important service to government. MEDC's Project Map Website currently discloses 2009 and 2010 spending of \$7.2 billion of public incentives, to be matched by over \$15.5 billion of private funding. This creates a projected 163,743 directly resulting jobs and 382,975 indirectly resulting jobs—over half a million total jobs (546,718) from two budget years. This information, with all of the underlying detail, is extremely valuable in advertising successes and bolstering customer confidence among citizens, besides encouraging participation.

**Extracting information from data adds value.** Meaningful data that is easily and speedily obtained, in a form suited to individual needs, is much more valuable and likely to be used. Whether you're a legislator proving a point in debate or a taxpayer looking for answers, quick, reliable data is crucial to your needs. The MEDC Project Map now provides that data from past years, and an upcoming release will link to the MEDC customer relationship management (CRM) database to enable access to year-to-date, "real-time" information.

## **2 - Converging Openness and Transparency with Government and Customer Utility**

**Improving upon "traditional" open government** has also been accomplished. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) laws require government agencies to disclose all data upon request, including that which is buried in internal systems and databases. In practice, very few outside people or organizations are sophisticated enough to formulate such a FOIA request. When they do, the raw data provided in response is usually of little use. What they really need is usable *information*--not data. The project map goes far beyond the minimum legal standard for open government defined by FOIA requirements, by providing information on demand in a format that is flexible, intuitive, and relevant to many different stakeholders and constituencies.

**3 - Innovation: Applying technical innovation** produced the desired feature set within the project's very tight timeline and will facilitate completion of similar projects. The initial project time-frame caused lumps in the throats of some worried executives. Partnering with local company IDV Solutions proved to be the answer. Not only was the entire project completed within 2 months, start-to-finish, but also MEDC became the first in-state client among the company's world-wide customers. Since the MEDC's mission is to encourage Michigan business, the ability to use local talent was particularly gratifying.

In addition to being indispensable for this project, the highly-configurable mapping interface layer was piloted and proven for filling a previous gap in the portfolio of the state's Center for Shared Solutions (CSS, an arm of the Department of Technology Management and Budget that manages the state's geographic information systems). The software and techniques will transfer easily to any similar project seeking a solution for the intuitive spatial presentation of data in a user-friendly format.

**4 - Green, Sustainable and Efficient: Replacing paper documents** that comprised the MEDC's annual report to the legislature was an initial focus of the project. Previously they'd used hundreds of thick binders, prepared with countless staff hours and distributed to State legislators, congressmen, city and county officials, and their teams. Limited binder space and resources forced sorting and printing data only by county, but election districts usually span multiple counties. legis and other elected officials or their staffs had to page through and manually compile the stats for their own districts in order to obtain data useful to them. The new method of reporting is not only much greener, saving reams of paper, but also far less labor-intensive, both in production and in use. Now MEDC provides only a slim booklet with a link to the site. Work is underway to eliminate the paper distribution altogether, replacing it with just a CD and a site link.

**5 - Congruence with Federal Models and Transferability:** In response to President Obama's Open Government Initiative and growing demand among voters, other states must find inexpensive and practical ways to bring transparency information to citizens. MEDC's innovative combination of existing techniques and technology exposes the previously-buried data that policy-makers need and citizens want, all within the familiar, easily-grasped, and user-tested format of a Bing Maps interface.

- Easy to use, and has current and archival data.
- Covers all key programs and includes occupational breakdowns.
- Complete information on incentive amounts.
- Full identifying information on recipient, not just generic descriptions.
- Linking recipient data with geographic and exact street-address location.
- Data on outcomes such as jobs created or retained and wages paid.
- Useful form in which data is presented—customizable reports.

The universal availability and low cost of the project's building blocks make imitation by others an attractive option.

- Low cost development through vendor with national experience.
- Use of standard map application interface available to any state—Microsoft Bing Maps.
- Innovative cross-boundary public/private (Microsoft & State of Michigan) unlimited Bing Maps license.
- Custom report design and commonly-applicable categories can be leveraged by others.
- Very strategic integration of job impact by legislative district is useful for any state.

## **E. BENEFIT OF THE PROJECT**

### **1 - Savings and Cost Avoidance**

**Leveraging existing assets:** Desired functionality was obtained by leveraging existing Bing Maps state-wide enterprise licensing, saving the cost of purchasing an additional geographic foundation while meeting the requirements of the IDV middleware to which it was coupled. This relatively inexpensive middleware, actually a pre-coded plug-in for Bing Maps, was the only piece the state had to purchase.

Configuration of middleware linking the MEDC database to Bing Maps turned out to be far less time-consuming than expected, mainly just turning off many of the myriad of available features in order to keep the interface simple and user-friendly. About 90% of project efforts focused on setting up the numerous reports, including queries and PDF production.

**Low-Budget and high-impact:** Less paper and reduced labor yield cost savings, while initial investment is minimal. Total cost (not including sunk cost of internal salaries) was only \$35,000, including a one-year software license. But in addition to saving the material and labor costs of producing annual reports (recovering about half of the start-up price over 3 years), far greater savings will be realized statewide from several sources.

The various government officials and teams using MEDC project information will no longer spend grueling and expensive man-hours searching, compiling and “re-packaging” the data for their needs. Including legislative districts, counties, townships, and others, Michigan has over 2000 distinct districts and administrative authorities. Avoiding a few hours of work for each at the median wage of Michigan paralegal clerks (\$9.13/hr.) would save nearly \$75,000 each year.

Other transparency projects using the groundbreaking map interface data presentation concept will reap savings by borrowing both the technology and the established expertise gained by the MEDC Project Website development team. And perhaps most importantly, the improved effectiveness of legislators, government agency leaders, industry partners, job seekers, spending monitors, entrepreneurs, and others who use the site, though hard to measure directly, will easily produce dollar benefits far in excess of project cost.

However, this site is providing a service that was not previously available to citizens, so quantifiable savings cannot truly measure its benefit. For example, the improved branding of Michigan methods of governmental strategic business support and the promotion of MEDC’s projects and programs would alone be well worth the original outlay.

## **2 - Enterprise and Geographic Designation Benefits**

**Promotion of Clear Data Disclosure:** Much of the benefit of public disclosure and transparency is tied to the geographic nature of the information. At the same time, a geographic presentation makes data more approachable and understandable.

Assessing the fairness, accountability, and equity among various geopolitical entities requires evaluating the geographic distribution of aid. The Project Map’s highly visual and spatial representation of data can help ensure that policy-makers avoid similarities to negative map-related practices such as “redlining” and gerrymandering that have occurred in other times and places. These same policy-makers can benefit from easily demonstrating the integrity of their unbiased decisions by showing proof of their even-handed disbursements.

**Targeting Help Toward Needy Areas:** The MEDC Project Map lets leaders easily visualize and match patterns of incentive distribution with patterns of need, patterns of aid with transportation and population patterns. At the same time, the one-click access to project details will help them ensure adequate wage levels and avoid creating pockets of low earners who need further government aid.

**Aid in Upcoming Redistricting:** The MEDC Project Map will be an invaluable tool for statewide redistricting that is constitutionally-mandated to follow the 2010 US Census. The MEDC Project map leverages political boundary maps maintained centrally by the state’s Center for Shared Solutions. Because this information is maintained as GIS “polygons” independent of the project data, the map will automatically reflect the new political districts as soon as they are implemented at the state level. Moreover, this independence of project data and district polygons will enable evaluation of proposed districts during the redistricting process, and will support before and after modeling to assess the economic

development view of the proposed new political boundaries.

### **3 – Ease of Use, Agency Image Enhancement, Responsive to Needs**

**Ease of Use:** Vastly improving the user experience saves time and drudgery for report recipients at every level of government since now the data is all GIS-based and enables filtering by multiple criteria. In seconds, users can obtain statewide or regional total reports, or totals for counties or districts. They can get totals by year, by incentive program, or by industry--or indeed by any combination of the above. If further detail is desired, clicking on an individual location brings up specific information about each project, including names and addresses of incentive recipients. All project reports reveal agreed-upon amounts of both private and state investment along with the numbers of jobs gained or saved and expected associated payroll returns. In addition, all reports are produced in a PDF format for easy downloading or printing. All of this makes it simple for officials and constituents alike to quickly answer the ongoing question, "What have you done for us lately?"

**Agency Image Enhancement:** The initial site roll-out was a "soft-launch" without fanfare or press announcement, so that background refinements could be made. Still, user response has been extremely positive from the target audience. The site was introduced personally to state legislators and has drawn spontaneous interest from many other stakeholders in the sphere of public and economic development policy.

The slick yet simple interface enhances agency image and promotes broader use of the available programs. The site also encourages new company contacts when they see the programs of others already in place.

**Job-Finding Resource:** Some citizens use the watchdog aspects of the site but others can use the information to spot employment opportunities. Unemployed workers, job training providers and placement agencies can apply the display of icons and sorting by industry to locate particular industry hot-spots. The site provides a crucial service in a state that has recorded the worst unemployment rate in the nation for at least 4 of the last 5 years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**4 - A Legacy of Technical Excellence:** One of the most lasting benefits of this project will be the ongoing use of transparency-related web displays that truly satisfy users as both customers and owners of government. The benefits of transparency are significant and their impact can extend far beyond the immediate revelation of current government statistics. In the next few weeks, the MEDC Project Map will form the centerpiece for the roll-out of a highly-anticipated transparency portal containing a broader range of information disclosure.

The piloting of this new GIS map visualization software will promote and enable a host of other projects to render data in a user-friendly and highly-customizable format. In the future, the application of similar presentation methods to other projects will reduce up-front effort while at the same time enhancing public image and helping state agencies to be more responsive to the communication requirements of constituents. The innovations of the MEDC Project Map demonstrate that integrating visual-spatial with textual-numerical presentation and reporting techniques can be a highly-effective means to maximize intuitive data acquisition and comprehension in a way that is efficient—and pleasing—for users.