NASS IDEAS Award Nomination – 12/20/19

Nomination on behalf of: NH Secretary of State William Gardner

Point of Contact: Deputy NH Secretary of State David Scanlan
603-271-3242 / David.Scanlan@SOS.NH.GOV

Project Title: Amazon Alexa Interface for State of New Hampshire Elections

Project Lead: Dean Dexter, Assistant NH Secretary of State

Summary: The New Hampshire Secretary of State's Office has partnered with Amazon Web Services on a groundbreaking innovation: to develop, create, and launch an Alexa skill application and Google Action that makes New Hampshire elections information available to anyone with an enabled Alexa device, including any smartphone with the Alexa application. This project is designed to provide voters, potential voters, candidates, members of the press, and anyone interested with easy access to information about New Hampshire elections and procedures. This voice-first technology also dramatically increases access to this information for those with disabilities. Additionally, by making this information available through popular technology, we are reaching young voters, and indeed the next generation of voters, on a platform they already use readily.

General Subject Area of Nomination: Elections

Executive Summary:

History: The Amazon Alexa Interface for the State of New Hampshire Elections project came about as part of an effort to make New Hampshire's election laws and electoral information easily accessible through the use of existing and popular "voice-first" technology. This innovative project allows anyone with an enabled Alexa device, including a smartphone, to get information about New Hampshire elections simply by asking Alexa. The Alexa application was unveiled earlier this week. The New Hampshire Secretary of State's Office has been thrilled to work alongside Voice XP, Democracy Live and PCC on this groundbreaking endeavor.

Significance: New Hampshire's political culture is a cornerstone of our identity as a state. By virtue of New Hampshire's First-in-the-Nation Presidential Primary status, information about New Hampshire elections—including government administration and electoral activities—is widely sought after, both here in New Hampshire and across the country. Transparency and quick access to accurate information are critical to maintaining confidence in the integrity of state government and our elections.

This is the first application of this technology to be used in this way, and this voice-activated technology stands to dramatically enhance voter participation, education, and outreach in New Hampshire and beyond. By expanding easy public access to governmental information through readily accessible popular technology, the New Hampshire Secretary of State's Office is not only raising awareness and engagement in New Hampshire elections, but is advancing technology that promotes civic engagement, particularly with the next generation of voters. By integrating this information into already popular technology, this project folds seamlessly into the daily lives of Granite-Staters of all ages and enhances their access to critical electoral information.

Impacts/Results: The Secretary of State's Office is engaging in a robust awareness campaign including social media, press coverage, and mass distribution of informational materials at polling places across the state to encourage voters to utilize this Alexa application for access to important electoral information.

This application also includes a notification system where users can choose to provide limited contact information and methods by which the New Hampshire Secretary of State's Office can send additional information, updates, and reminders regarding things like filing deadlines and reminders about absentee ballots.

Easy access to elections information is critical to ensuring meaningful civic engagement and successful administration of elections. This project is reflective of New Hampshire's strong political climate—acknowledging where we've been and where we're headed as a state. By embracing this evolving technology, the State is meeting people where they're at and acknowledging that voice-activated, hands-free technology is the direction of the future. Not only does this next-generation technology cater to the preferences of younger Granite-Staters, its voice-activation feature enhances the ability of those with disabilities to access the information they need without assistance.

While myriad information is available through this application, the general subject area is now focused on New Hampshire elections. Moving forward, there will be various additional applications for this technology within other divisions of the New Hampshire Department of State, including the Corporation Division, Vital Records, and State Archives. This groundbreaking project is revolutionizing the delivery of information in the First-in-the-Nation Primary State, just in time for the 2020 federal and state elections, including the Presidential Primary on February 11th.

Granite Staters take New Hampshire's distinction as the First-in-the-Nation Presidential Primary state very seriously, and very much value governmental access and transparency. By incorporating Alexa technology into our Elections Division, the New Hampshire Secretary of State's Office is enhancing its service to not only New Hampshire, but the country.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE ELECTIONS ALEXA SKILL

*"Alexa, enable **State of New Hampshire Elections**"*

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE ELECTIONS
ALEXA SKILL – <u>ONCE ENABLED</u>...

*"Alexa, ask **State of New Hampshire Elections**... **Take me on a tour!"***

PROJECT OVERVIEW

- Deploy a State of New Hampshire Elections Alexa Skill that is a "first-of-its-kind" technology application. This skill will:
  - Provide State of New Hampshire Election information
  - Educate, inform, and assist New Hampshire voters at any time
  - Meet users where they're at by utilizing popular voice-first technology to promote civic engagement and voter participation

WHAT CAN I ASK ALEXA ABOUT STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE ELECTIONS? EXAMPLES:

SAY: "Alexa: Enable State of New Hampshire Elections."

Alexa, ask State of New Hampshire Elections...

- Take me on a tour! (to hear a menu)

- Send me an absentee ballot.

- Where is my polling place?

- How do I register to vote?

- Send me a sample ballot.

- Share election results.

HOW DOES THE STATE CONTROL THE CONTENT?

- The NH Department of State controls the content using the VoiceXP SaaS platform.

- There is a secure login required in order to create, edit, and maintain content.

- Data is entered through simple, form-based data entry and an easy no-coding process.

PRIVACY AND DATA INTEGRITY

Does use of this application save anyone's information?

- By default, the Skill will ask people if they want to provide their contact information. Contact information includes full name, email, address, & phone number.

- If a user chooses to share their contact information, it will be saved to a secure file hosted on the Amazon Cloud that *only* the State can download.

- If a user chooses *not* to share their contact information, none of their information will be saved.

Are data metrics provided?

- Yes. Metrics are available through Google Analytics and *only* accessible to the State.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information, please contact:

David Scanlan, Deputy NH Secretary of State

Email: David.Scanlan@SOS.NH.GOV

Phone: (603) 271-3242