ID # (assigned by CSG): 12-S-15-NC

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: _____ North Carolina __________ 

Assign Program Category (applicant): Government Operations and Technology/Public Information (Use list at end of application)

Program Name: North Carolina State Government Social Media Archiving and Access Program
Administering Agency: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
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1. How long has this program operated (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old as of April 5, 2012 to be eligible for this year’s award.

   The program being described was piloted in 2009 but is now fully functioning.

2. Describe the program:
   • Why was it created?
     The North Carolina State Archives and the State Library of North Carolina, divisions within the Department of Cultural Resources (DCR), operate with legislative mandates to preserve state government information and make it accessible to the citizens of North Carolina (G.S. §121-2, G.S. §125-11.5 - 11.13, G.S. §132-1b). North Carolina state records retention schedules articulate the State Archives’ responsibility for state agency Web sites and the State Library for the publications found therein.
Government agencies increasingly utilize Web pages to document their actions, as well as to publicize their policies and activities. Since 2005, DCR has captured and archived Web sites created by North Carolina government agencies and made them available to the public in the North Carolina Web site archives (www.webarchives.ncdcr.gov).

When Gov. Beverly Perdue took office in 2009, she challenged state agencies to harness the power of social media tools to communicate with the citizens of N.C. in order to promote government openness and access to government agencies. With the increased focus on transparency in government and the proliferation of Web 2.0 and, specifically, social media usage in 2008, DCR realized that its legislative responsibility to preserve the records of state government would become increasingly difficult.

Social media communication tools facilitate interactive information sharing and collaboration. In addition, these sites serve as new ways to deliver information to and interact with citizens. Commonly used social media Web sites, such as Facebook®, Twitter®, YouTube®, Flickr®, and LinkedIn®, have large, loyal user bases and are, thus, increasingly important outreach and communication tools for government entities from the federal to the local level. These tools allow citizens to interact with government in new ways by commenting on or “liking” a post or a similar instantaneous interaction. The speed and transparency of these citizen-to-government and citizen-to-citizen interactions is a completely new form of government information interchange. And ensuring the preservation of the agency information as well as the context of these dynamic communications between government and the citizenry became a priority for DCR.

State agencies were interested in utilizing these tools but hesitant to embrace them until they received guidance. The Governor’s office, Information Technology Services (ITS), and DCR wanted to provide guidance on how to best utilize them as well as encourage agencies to use social media. In order to encourage social media usage, the North Carolina Governor’s office, ITS, and DCR began drafting a document entitled Best Practices for Social Media Usage in North Carolina State Government. Unknown at the time was whether or not social media content could be “archived,” and if it could, how it would look to future users of the information. The particular challenges that social media sites pose are their dynamic interactivity, private ownership, changing user settings, and a constantly evolving technical infrastructure. DCR staff contacted staff from the Internet Archive (archive.org), a 501(c)(3) non-profit founded in 1996, with the purpose of building an Internet library. DCR was already utilizing their services to collect, preserve, and provide access to standard state government Web sites, and realized that their experience would be invaluable to solving this extraordinary challenge of not only collecting, but also archiving and providing ongoing access to social media content.

DCR found, when they approached the Internet Archive, that they, too, had begun thinking about this and were looking for a partner to pilot just such a system. And so, for six months, two staff persons in DCR spent many hours testing, writing technical specifications, talking through software bugs, and retesting, until the system was released in the summer of 2009.

- Why is it a new and creative approach or method?

DCR has been a national leader in the preservation of digitally created (known as “born-digital”) records and publications. Since 2005, over 500 separate Web sites have been archived using the Internet Archive’s “Archive It” tool. Collected, or “harvested,” on a periodic basis, these Web sites can be viewed as they existed at the time of the harvest. Today, the DCR hosts a publicly accessible database and Web site dedicated to providing access to the multiple versions of Internet sites, records, and publications of North Carolina state agencies dating back to 1995. What makes this particularly unique is that the social media sites harvested since 2009 are searchable side-by-side with this data.
To the best of our knowledge, North Carolina was the first state to collect the social media of state government and to provide ongoing access to it.

DCR is able to capture and preserve Web sites and social media in an automated manner. Without the use of the Internet Archives’ Archive-It tool, agencies would be responsible for archiving Web sites through a laborious process of manually downloading Web sites and transferring those files to the State Archives and then manually downloading all of the individual publications, such as Word and PDF documents, and transferring those to the State Library. With the rapidly changing content of social media Web sites, this process would be nearly impossible.

- What are the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order?

**Fall 2008**
- Governor’s office approached DCR to ask if they could archive social media content. The Governor’s office wanted to make a major push for agencies to begin using social media tools but wanted to make sure they were handled properly according to the public records law.
- DCR recognized the need for social media harvesting and approached the Internet Archive to develop a tool to collect social media sites, including Facebook®, Twitter®, YouTube®, Flickr®, and LinkedIn®.

**January 2009–July 2009**
- DCR and the Internet Archive began pilot phase.
- Test harvests of Gov. Beverly Perdue’s social media sites were performed:
  - November 2009: First harvest of all known state agency social media sites: http://webarchives.ncdcr.gov/browsebyagency.htm

**December 2009**

**2009–present**
- Addition of all known social media sites throughout North Carolina state government. Quarterly harvest of all social media sites.
- DCR outreach to agency Public Information Officers as well as agency General Councils to inform them of the need to know of social media sites being used by state agencies.

**March 2012**
- Video tutorial made available.
• Is it effective? Provide tangible results and examples.

The program is a tremendous success. North Carolina was the first state to begin harvesting social media sites in the spring of 2009, and since that time nearly 200 separate social media sites have been harvested, preserved, and made accessible through this system on a bimonthly basis. This amounts to over 15 million documents harvested from social media Web sites and 2.6 TB of stored data since March 2009. The additional value is that not only are the activities of agencies preserved, but the interactions between government and citizens (and between citizens)—the comments, notes, quiz results, and tags—are archived along with the posts, images, and videos created by state agency personnel.

3. Did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator’s name, present address, telephone number, and e-mail address.

While the system was developed by the Internet Archive, an organization based in San Francisco, California, North Carolina was the first state in the U.S. to pilot and implement the social media harvest program and to develop accompanying best practices and a tutorial for statewide distribution. DCR staff discussed this policy with a social media committee of the National Association of State Chief Information Officer’s group and is part of the National Archives and Records Administration Toolkit for Electronic Records for others to use.

4. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

Twenty-three state archives and libraries participate in the Internet Archive’s Archive-It program. Only twelve of those capture social media, and only North Carolina has been harvesting the social media of state government since 2009. Most states only harvest static Web sites and do not include social media sites in their acquisitions process. Additionally, several sites that do harvest social media only do so for their governor’s online activity. To the best of our knowledge, DCR’s program is the longest-lived, has the broadest scope, and is the most extensive capture of social media sites in United States state government.

5. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter when attempting to adopt this program?

There are five significant and ongoing challenges.

1. Law. As determined by the North Carolina General Assembly, the North Carolina State Archives is the official archival agency for public records of N.C. government. In General Statute 132.1, public record is defined as “all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, films, sound recordings, magnetic or other tapes, electronic data-processing records, artifacts, or other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance in connection with the transaction of public business by any agency of North Carolina government or its subdivisions.” While Web sites are not specifically defined as public record, the phrase “regardless of physical form or characteristics” allows DCR to view this in its broad sense and include Web sites as part of its purview.

2. Terms of Service. Social media tools provide limitless possibilities for collaborative government, but not without challenges. Each social media site contains its own unique Terms of Service and these are not always in line with state policy. Intellectual property rights and the use of social media Web sites is an ongoing issue and can change from day to day. State agencies are advised in the Best Practices for Social Media Usage in North Carolina, to always be aware of a site’s Terms of Service before submitting content.

3. Cost. There is an annual fee to use the Archive-It tool, based on the amount of data harvested each year.
4. **Staffing.** Based on the frequency and expansiveness of the harvests, significant staff time must be dedicated to the program. DCR harvests state government social media activity quarterly. We have prioritized this program and have appropriated as much staffing as possible to ensure that it occurs on schedule. Additionally, two separate divisions team up on this effort because it is such a priority, to ensure that the content captured is appropriate and functions properly.

5. **Storage.** While the Internet Archive stores and provides access to all of the content harvested using this tool, best practice demands that a copy of that data be stored on North Carolina state government servers, as well. Current storage of our entire Web site and social media sites archive is nearly 7 TB (31+ million files). DCR purchases a copy of their data bi-annually and stores it locally.

Should another state with fewer resources to dedicate to harvest social media sites want to establish a similar program, it might consider harvesting less frequently to decrease the cost of the tool, staffing, and storage.

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