

State: Washington

2016 grade: A-

2014 grade: B+

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Digital States Survey grade summary for Washington state

With a wealth of IT projects and programs, Washington lifted its B+ grade in 2014 to an A- this year. The work the state has done to fine-tune and regiment its cybersecurity alert systems is exceptional. Beyond a spate of educational and collaborative duties, in 2015 Washington's Office of Cyber Security reviewed 235 systems for compliance, its Security Operations Center provided 736 security alerts to agencies, and the Computer Emergency Readiness Team performed security incident response efforts for 35 cases in 2015 — each case representing a serious threat.

Another standout achievement is the state's efforts to educate business owners of regulatory standards and provide a simple path for transactions and compliance. This year business license renewals filed through the state's online platform represented 92.6 percent, while the percentage of new business licenses applied for online stood at 82.8 percent. A live chat feature complements this work with ready advice for business owners trying to get tax filing information. Statistics from the service show that 95.7 percent of the almost 22,000 chats were able to answer questions in less than 60 seconds. State officials have supported this economic development work by creating another Web platform called the Washington BusinessHub that provides a "one-stop resource for starting and operating a business."

Another of Washington's impressive feats was its ability to collaborate to implement the Affordable Care Act. The Health Benefits Exchange, Department of Social and Health Services, and Health Care Authority took on a joint effort to maintain and augment the use of HealthPlanFinder, the platform that helps citizens enroll in health-care coverage. In an annual review after its first year in use in 2014, the tool cut the total percentage of uninsured residents by nearly half, from about 14 percent to roughly 8 percent, and as June 2016, Washington officials say that more than 1.6 million state residents had access to health care thanks to the platform.

Notable accomplishments also consisted of a database that mapped more than 530 trailheads and 12,000 miles of trails, and a joint venture with Harvard Business School that conducted an experiment to assess strengths and weakness within Holacracy, a self-management model for productivity.