



# FTA Awards Nomination/Entry Form

## Person who led this effort or project

**Name** Virginia Neslein

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## About your program, idea, or project

**Name your program, idea, or project:** Where's My Refund IVR Project

### What is the problem that you wanted to solve?

The problem that we wanted to solve was that our Where's My Refund IVR was down from October of 2023 to February 2024 due to an End-of-life situation. We needed to get the IVR backup up and running quickly. We had approximately 116,000 calls per month that were coming through on our IVR line. After looking at several vendors, it did not look like we were going to have it back up and running during our busy Tax time. Our Deputy Commissioner, Don Graham stated, "There is a monetary effect on State Collections when my RCO's can't be out on the road collecting delinquent money. Having the IVR in place has alleviated a significant number of these calls in the past that we are having to take this year". Since the IVR was down, we were losing approximately \$1.5 million in revenue because our personnel that typically worked in collections were now having to answer phone calls.

### Who was involved in addressing the problem?

ALDOR Information Technology Division: Director, Rita Allen; Assistant Director, Matthew Dyar; Network Services Manager, Antiwan Reuben; IT Project Manager - Virginia Neslein;

ALDOR Income Tax: Administrator: Director, Kathleen Abrams; Assistant Director, Craig Davis; Individual Income Tax - Revenue Manager II, Stoney Trammell; Individual Income Tax - Revenue Manager I, Valerie Thomas; Individual Income Tax - Revenue Manager I, Angela Gann; Individual Income Tax – Financial Specialist, Adrienne Tillery; Individual Income Tax – Revenue Tax Accountant/Auditor III, Tangela Lane;

ALDOR Collections: Director, Manford Jackson; Assistant Director, Miriam Dingman; Revenue Manager II, Kimberly Bethea; Taxpayer Assistance Group, Rev Compliance Off III, Hunter Harris; AWS Engineers; Office of Information Technology Engineers.

### How did they go about finding a solution?

With much brainstorming and research, IT Project Manager, Virginia Neslein, heard about the implementation of AWS Connect in the state of Georgia at our AWS Executive Business Review. We then reached out to AWS to see if AWS Connect had an IVR solution that could be implemented separately. At the time, we were in the process of moving several of our in-house servers and applications to AWS. We provided existing call flows/routing to the AWS team, who were able to leverage them to create the new IVR application. The existing Where's My Refund lookup functionality that powers My Alabama Taxes (taxpayer online portal) was also able to be used for the new IVR as well. The end result was a new IVR powered by Amazon Lex, an AI powered chatbot.

### Describe the outcome. What is the new idea, approach, program, or activity?

We had a great outcome! With AWS, we were able to get our IVR up and running within 7 days. We implemented a solution that worked with our Cisco Call Center through our State Central IT, Office of Information Technology. The Where's My Refund IVR was developed, tested, and placed in production within 1 week. After our Where's My Refund IVR in English was in production, we then worked on a

Spanish version of the IVR. This Spanish IVR was developed and implemented within a week.

**What has changed since this was implemented? How have your operations improved? Include any data, analytics or metrics that would show the value of your program. Don't forget management advantages such as improved morale.**

During Tax Year 2023-24, our IVR handled approximately 4,000 calls per day with no wait time or a need to talk to an agent. The citizens were clearly ramping up call volume because of the speed at which they could get their questions answered. With the implementation of the IVR, ALDOR employees were able to focus on their primary duties to review and release tax refunds quicker or work on audit and collection activities. Employee morale has also seen a boost, partially attributed to the reduced call volume.

**Is there any component of your program that makes it workable only in your state or city?**

Everybody ought to be doing this.

**Is this an in-house project, or did you partner with an outside vendor or service-provider?**

Our idea, but we used a publicly available software or service for at least part of the implementation

**Additional information or comments about your usage of outside vendors or service providers.**

AWS, our cloud provider by choice, offers unmatched scalability and flexibility, allowing ALDOR to adjust resources based on demand. AWS provided the services of their IVR which is FEDRAMP (Publication 1075) compliant.

**What comes next – will you be adding to your program, rolling it out more widely, trying additional approaches?**

We are extremely happy with the results of our current AWS Connect IVR. This week, February 24-28, 2025, our IVR has handled 101,913 calls with 1,522 of these calls being Spanish. Having a dependable IVR, has improved customer satisfaction and has pleased all involved.

## Additional Optional Materials