Achievement Awards · 2012

Best of Category Winners

June 2012

NACo
National Association of Counties
The Voice of America's Counties

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The Voice of America's Counties

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Compiled by Steven Meyer, Research Intern

About the National Association of Counties

The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation's 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public's understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit *www.naco.org*.

Arts and Historic Preservation

Art Partners Preserve Historic Property

Clayton County, GA
Population: 259,424

Over the last decade, historic Clayton County saw a massive population explosion due to the urban sprawl of nearby Atlanta. Facing a large increase in population density, historic centers of culture in the county such as the Jonesboro Historic District came under pressure to adapt with the change in population. The urbanization of the region forced the county to vacate antiquated buildings in Jonesboro such as the County Courthouse, leaving empty buildings along Main Street. After realizing the threat that urban sprawl would continue to have on the district, the county partnered with the non-profit Arts Clayton in attempt to preserve its historic buildings and promote the arts.

In 2008, Arts Clayton partnered with the county and moved into the abandoned courthouse, setting the stage for the county's historic preservation program. Tremendous multi-jurisdictional collaborations supported Arts Clayton's move into this historic property, as the location received grants from city, county, state, and federal partners. The building now hosts a summer camp, after-school art programs, a three dimensional sculpture garden, and more. The results have been overwhelming: in 2011 alone, roughly 64,000 local residents participated in 30 exhibits, 240 art classes, 24 workshops, and numerous community outreach events based on arts programming available to children, families, and the ethnic diversity of the community.

In partnership with Arts Clayton, the preservation program has not only brought the creativity of art to the community but it has also contributed to the local economy. The revitalization of Jonesboro Historic District has encouraged businesses and families to settle in the region. Even so, the program is affordable. Annual operating costs for every aspect of the program come just under $500,000. This includes salaries, utilities, insurance, and much more that keep not only the historic building alive, but the community as well.

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Children and Youth

Stormy the Raindrop Public Education Campaign

Fairfax County, VA
Population: 1,081,726

Situated directly within the Potomac and Chesapeake watersheds, water pollution in the densely populated Fairfax County is a major concern. In 2007, the Fairfax County Stormwater Management (STW) office began to work on a mission to improve the public's ability to understand watershed issues and the actions that can be taken by individuals. The campaign began with the introduction of a child-friendly character named Stormy the Raindrop who appeared at local events in a water drop costume. The success of this character escalated the campaign into a comprehensive education initiative which included a very popular series of coloring books and giveaways.

In 2009 and 2010, STW staff produced two educational coloring books in accordance with Virginia's Standards of Learning and Fairfax County Public School's (FCPS) Program of Study for fourth-grade audiences. The books attempted to show a connection between local waterways and the Atlantic Ocean in order to give students a better understanding of their global impact. Produced entirely by STW staff and printed in-house via the County's printing office, these coloring books cost under $12,000 and were distributed to thousands of students.

Pilot studies and reviews from students indicated that the coloring books were a massive success, prompting STW to continue the Stormy the Raindrop campaign. At local events, Stormy met with young children, distributing thousands of recycled reusable shopping bags as well as recycled dog waste bags. This public relations campaign not only educated students but it educated their parents as well. At the height of the campaign, Fairfax County aired a television puppet show with Stormy as the main character. The show debuted on children's television programs and was a great success, as it educated families on steps they can take to improve the health of local waterways. The end result of this campaign indicates that successful programs do not require a great deal of money- Stormy the Raindrop was created entirely by county staff and is thoroughly enjoyed by the community.

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Civic Education and Public Information

MyBallot
Orange County, CA
Population: 3,010,232

A major issue that faces counties every day is encouraging the youth to become involved with politics and the election process. In Orange County, officials realized that virtually none of the youth population is willing to volunteer or participate in electoral events. In fact, the county found that the average age of a polling volunteer was 72 years old. To increase youth participation, Orange County started the MyBallot program which is aimed at high school students aged 14-18.

The county directed the Registrar of Voters to conduct educational sessions at local high schools. The educational involvement process takes place during three different sessions. During the first session, staff from the Registrar of Voters office delivers an in-class presentation to the high school's student leadership (ASB) class. The program's second step is ballot creation. ASB students are taken on a two or three hour field trip to the Registrar of Voters' office, where they experience the complexities of conducting elections. Students work with the Department to create their own ballots for an upcoming Homecoming or Student Government election at their school. The field trip introduces students to ballot generation software and provides a behind-the-scenes look at the intricate process in place for conducting an election. The last component puts what the students have learned into practice. The Registrar of Voters brings its mobile voting unit to the school and hosts the school's election over the course of an entire school day. The Registrar of Voters provides staff to host the events, process student voters, and tally the election results. The Department also

uses the events as an outreach opportunity to register students to vote, answer any election questions students might have, and to recruit student poll workers for future elections.

There are no additional staffing or equipment costs above labor and material costs already incurred by the Registrar of Voters. By providing historical context for elections and a unique voting experience for students at no charge to schools, this program addresses the need for additional educational opportunities in government, history, and civic engagement in schools in the wake of budget cuts. It also offers schools an opportunity to offer high-quality elections that help develop civic-minded citizens, get students excited about voting, and build morale and school spirit.

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Community / Economic Development

Think Twice MC

Montgomery County, OH
Population: 535,153

After the recent recession, many local businesses across America began to close, allowing big corporations to fill the void left in their absence. These local businesses are often responsible for a great deal of county income through taxation, and therefore their closure has a big impact on local economies. In response to this dilemma, Montgomery County of Ohio started the Think Twice MC campaign in 2010. The campaign was directed in cooperation with Cox Media Group, Comtactics, and Montgomery County in an attempt to increase consumer loyalty to local businesses.

Utilizing a smartphone application created by Comtactics, consumers can interactively shop at local businesses. The application allows the consumer to scan QR barcodes displayed at storefront windows, which can give the customer a chance to redeem a coupon or even be entered in a contest to win prizes such as an iPad. Scanning the barcode also engages the customer to "check-in" at the local business, both increasing social media visibility and giving the business owner customer loyalty information. The program engages the customer in the shopping process, positively increasing their attitudes towards local businesses. To increase consumer use of the application, Cox Media Group has agreed to air commercials on local television channels which reach nearly 1.2 million viewers each day. These commercials not only increase awareness of the application, but they also influence consumers buying habits as they encourage individuals to buy local products.

Costing only $7,500 to produce the mobile application, other costs for the campaign are minimal as they pertain to website maintenance and promotional activities. However, revenue from local businesses covers the majority of these fees. At a price of $7,500 dollars, the campaign saw an 8.7% increase in tax revenue over the next year that resulted in over a $5 million dollar gain, meaning that the gap from before the recession had closed. This, of course, may not be exclusively from the ThinkTwice program, but based on statistical analysis, ThinkTwice's efforts may certainly have played a role in the increase.

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County Administration and Management

Canvas The County
Richland County, SC
Population: 385,745

In 2009, Richland County realized that their two full-time business inspectors were only capable of inspecting 8.25% of businesses inspector per year, meaning that it would take two inspectors six years to inspect all businesses in the unincorporated areas of Richland County. The county determined that 75% of new businesses will fail within their first three years of operation. Therefore, many businesses may open and close without ever having obtained a business license inspection. In response, Richland County created their Canvas the County program.

The program employed a series of temporary inspectors to canvass local businesses during a two-week period. The inspectors were sent out to issue fees and other fines for businesses that were not correctly following county business guidelines. For example, businesses could receive fines for breaking rules that relate to new food tax rates, smoking regulations, and other issues. The inspectors were employed temporarily and carpooled in an effort to save money on automobile expenses. Additionally, the inspectors were directed to canvass dense business districts in an attempt to increase efficiency. The operating costs of the program were budgeted out to $21,000. However, after two weeks of inspecting, more than half of the budget was left over, prompting the county to pursue a third week of inspections. After three weeks, the program cost only $10,009 of the original $21,000 budget.

With such low operating costs, this program can be easily replicated and implemented in any county. The results of the program are outstanding. In three months, this pilot project generated $261,133 in business license fees and $49,470 in penalties, for a total of $310,603. With a program cost of $10,009, the return on investment was 31:1.

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Court Administration and Management

Problem Solving Courts - A County-Courts Partnership
Winnebago County, IL
Population: 295,127

Since the 1960's, national and local crime rates have been steadily declining but jails remain overcrowded within certain districts. As a result, there has been an interest in changing the prosecution and incarceration system in America. Winnebago County of Illinois started their Problem Solving Courts campaign in an effort to alter the incarceration process to make it a more resourceful process that actually gives solutions to problems rather than a punishment.

Working directly with the 17th Judicial Circuit Court, Winnebago County has established a comprehensive prosecution process that seeks to find meaningful solutions for criminal proceedings. Their program is based on five platforms: (1) Diversion Programs; (2) Deferred Prosecution; (3) Specialty Courts, such as drug and mental health courts; (4) Alternative-to-incarceration models; and, (5)

re-entry models. Over the past four years, the program has focused primarily on specialty courts and alternative-to-incarceration models. As a result, the 17th Judicial Circuit Court has established a wide array of specialty courts that allow the prosecution to handle the case in a different manner than through the traditional "get tough" policies practiced by typical criminal proceedings. Aside from specialty courts, the campaign encourages rehabilitation as an alternative to incarceration.

As jails in Winnebago County have historically been overcrowded, the Problem Solving Courts campaign has given a solution to the incarceration dilemma. The establishment of specialty courts combined with alternative punishments has saved the county a great deal of money and time that would have otherwise been spent on an inmate. As a result of the mental illness specialty court alone, a total of 25,389 jail days were saved between 2005 and 2010 for an expense savings of $1,523,340 at $60 per day. While this campaign may save jail space and money, it costs Winnebago County around $2.3 million annually on staffing and programs for its alternative criminal justice approaches. On top of this, the county typically allocates around $5 million for other aspects of the program. The long term benefits of this program are clear as the initiative has already saved taxpayers money, giving the county fiscal flexibility. Through this program, Winnebago County and the 17th Judicial Circuit Court created a partnership that is creating a successful, innovative and collaborative model for transformation.

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Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Summer-Student Basic Academy

Henrico County, VA
Population: 307,435

Faced with tough economic times, county governments are increasingly looking for ways to cut their budgets without diminishing the quality of service that they have been recognized for. In Henrico County, the Sheriff's department has collaborated with local universities to save taxpayers over $200,000 in prison guard salaries through an academic summer internship program.

The Summer-Student Basic Academy is a nine-credit internship program that lasts for nine weeks during the summer months. Students in good standing at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and Virginia Union University (VUU) who are interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement apply to the Academy to work as prison guards. These unpaid interns fill a void where otherwise paid prison guards would work, while also gaining excellent experience in the criminal justice field. Working five days a week from 8:00AM to 4:30PM, the students earn six academic credits from the internship alone. The university students are also required to enroll in an online course entitled "Jails and Issues in Short-Term Detention", giving them an academic background to their internship experience.

The program is very successful in Henrico County. Nearly 60 students applied for the internship program which accepts only 20 interns each round. Of these 20 students, 19 became active part-time employees of the Henrico County Sheriff's Office and began to fill shift shortages created by vacancies. The benefit of part-time employees back filling for full time staff positions is the substantial reduction in cost based on hourly rate as opposed to paying full-time staff members at an overtime rate or time and a half. Applauded by Congressman Eric Cantor for going "beyond traditional measures and improving services while saving taxpayer dollars", this program costs the county nothing and saves over $200,000 in prison salaries.

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Employment and Training

Job Boost II

Mecklenburg County, NC
Population: 923,427

As high unemployment rates continue to play a major role in county politics across the nation, communities have started to develop plans to alleviate the stress put on social welfare programs that benefit unskilled workers looking for jobs. In Mecklenburg County, officials have created a temporary employment program that allows the unemployed to get back on their feet in today's competitive job market.

Known during its second phase as Job Boost II, the program uses a DSS database to match eligible participants with appropriate job placements. The database is the result of a strong collaboration among the county government, staffing agencies, and community partners. The need for Job Boost II is critical in assisting the county to improve its low-skilled or non-skilled labor force. While Mecklenburg County has high-skilled jobs and a higher skilled labor pool, the low or

no-skilled worker is often discounted. The Job Boost II subsidized employment program provides opportunities for participants to experience the job market with the intent of expanding their life experience and becoming independent of time-dictated services. The program has placed hundreds of unskilled workers in various jobs in just a matter of months.

The original program budget for Mecklenburg County was $1,320,000.00 and had a placement goal of 200 individuals. However, due to the success of the program (200 placements within the first 3 months) the Mecklenburg County Job Boost II program solicited the state and was awarded another $660,000 for 100 more placements. Presently, the program has exceeded its placement goal of 300 to 376. The creation of so many jobs within such a short amount of time undoubtedly has a very positive effect on the local economy. Giving meaningful jobs to individuals who would otherwise live off of welfare checks does much more than reduce unemployment figures- it starts a trend that benefits the community for generations to come.

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Environmental Protection and Energy

Landfill Gas to Transportation Fuel Conversion
Dekalb County, GA
Population: 692,902

As gas prices continue to rise, county governments are put under increasing pressure to solve the fuel efficiency crisis associated with county automobiles. At the same time, the negative stigma associated with county landfills is another dilemma that local communities deal with on a daily basis. DeKalb County owns and operates the second largest active MSW landfill in Georgia with a total capacity of 50 million cubic yards, directly serving over 158,000 single family residential homes and 8,500 commercial customers. However, the county vehicles that service the landfill require over $4.5 million in fuel costs alone. In response to this situation, DeKalb County has received federal and local grants to establish their Landfill Gas to Transportation Fuels Conversion program, aimed at producing alternative automobile fuel from landfill trash.

Through the Department of Energy (DOE) and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), DeKalb County was awarded a grant for $8 million as part of the Clean Cities Atlanta Petroleum Reduction Program to convert a Landfill Gas (LFG) to Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) facility. Of the 25 grants awarded, this is the only DOE project that includes converting LFG to RNG, and will include two compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling stations at the landfill, maintenance shop upgrades, and purchase of 40 CNG fueled vehicles. With this conversion, DeKalb County will significantly reduce emissions, forecasting fuel savings of $3 million during the next eight years converting "trash to gas," and "gas to cash," while serving as home to

the first and only renewable natural gas processing facility for vehicle use of its kind in the Southeast, and processing more landfill gas than any other county in Georgia.

Although the cost of this project has been estimated at nearly $40 million, the positive results of the campaign will be immense. Renewable Natural Gas will be available through the existing natural gas infrastructure 24/7 creating a revenue stream for the county. The CNG dispensing station will be operational by September 2012, allowing the 79 CNG fueled vehicles in the county's fleet to see immediate fuel savings once. This facility marks a new objective of green energy and reduced dependency of foreign petroleum. Additionally, the plant will reduce carbon dioxide emissions equal to the amount produced by 865,400,050 gallons of gasoline.

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Health

Clay County First In Florida Text for Health Notification Program

Clay County, FL
Population: 191,395

In today's fast paced world of cell phones and the internet, health professionals are beginning to find that it is increasingly difficult to communicate with their patients using traditional methods such as the mail or through a landline telephone. In fact, according to Pew Internet and American Life Project statistics, more than half of teenagers use text messaging as their primary method of communication. This reality makes it difficult for sexually transmitted disease clinics in Clay County to deliver a diagnosis to individuals aged 15-24. In response, the county initiated its "Text for Health Notification Program".

The campaign is spearheaded by the Clay County Health Department's Epidemiology Program, which claims that over 70% of patients aged 15-24 have chosen to receive their diagnosis via a text message. The patients schedule their appointment through regular conventional methods, but the only difference is that they can receive their diagnosis within a brief thirty minutes from their appointment if they opt for a text message. Comparably, conventional methods of delivering a diagnosis typically take up to a whole week for a letter to come in the mail or for a patient to receive a phone call. Moreover, a diagnosis through the mail may never be read, whereas text messages are nearly always read. Patients were interviewed as to their willingness to receive notifications in the form of text messages through their cell phones and responded favorably. The plan, policy, procedures and forms were reviewed and approved according to legal requirements, HIPPA protections, and technical standards.

Being one of the first counties in the United States to adopt this program, it has proven to be very successful and easily replicated. The FL DOH Bureau of STD plans to implement the program statewide, estimating a potential savings of $3.28M for the state. To that end, the Bureau is looking to automating the text messaging process into PRISM, which is the statewide STD online reporting data base serving public and private practitioners. After the program was introduced, five other county health departments in Florida adopted the program. For a county that already has text messaging capabilities, there is no capital cost to introduce the program. In fact, the program does not incur any additional costs. Rather, money is saved as the program also reduced the average time between notifications to treatment from six days to four hours, causing staff expenditures to be reduced $115.50 per client, or $6,150 annually.

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Safe Transitions - Managing Hospital Discharge For County Residents Who Are Homeless
Montgomery County, MD
Population: 976,203

Recent data show that one in five homeless individuals admitted to shelter programs came from either in-patient medical facilities or other institutional settings. Without a stable home environment and family or peer support, people who have experienced homelessness and are recovering from a hospital visit are especially vulnerable to the harsh realities of living without shelter or food. Ensuring an individual's successful transition from an institutional setting into the community requires linkages to appropriate housing and community treatment following discharge. Unfortunately, much of America does not have a system set up to encourage a safe transition for the homeless, leaving individuals with life-threatening conditions to return to the streets. In Montgomery County, officials have started a program that breaks this trend and ensures a safe transition after hospital discharge.

The program in the Washington, D.C. suburb established a detailed protocol for discharge planners to follow. The protocol primarily includes an in-depth consideration of whether or not the patient is suitable for discharge, even under homeless conditions. Next, the protocol enforces that the discharge planner contacts appropriate shelter providers to determine that the patient will have a bed and resources to assist with their on-going medical needs. Finally, the protocol ensures that arrangements are made for follow up medical care, which involves transferring medical records to the patient as well as providing them with clothing, medical equipment, discharge instructions, and transportation to/from shelter locations.

The program resulted in a very successful change. Prior to the program, five area hospitals were identifying only a few dozen discharged patients as homeless, and arrangements for post-discharge care were largely left to the patient. Following implementation of the program, nearly 200 discharges of homeless patients have been collaboratively managed by hospital discharge staff each year, leading to a significant improvement in housing stability of homeless patients and a reduction in hospital re-entry discharge. Considering a start-up cost of $25,000 to support staff development, along with a $150,000 per year cost to staff community health nurses, this program is affordable and can be easily replicated in any county that has a homeless transition dilemma.

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Human Services
Collabor8 Virtual Call Center
Marion County, OH
Popultion: 66,482

As a result of the economic downturn, county governments across the nation have been forced to cut funding from crucial programs such as human services departments, as is the case in Ohio where budgets were reduced up to 50 percent over the past four years. Over the same time period, Ohio's county agencies responsible for delivering direct client services have seen caseloads increase by as much as 40 percent and staffing decrease by 30 percent through layoff and/or attrition. In response to this dilemma, Marion County has partnered with six other counties in Ohio (Delaware, Hancock, Knox, Morrow, Sandusky, and Wood) and the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services to create a virtual call center that will allow the human services departments of those counties to manage the increase in caseloads.

A common 800 number connects the seven noncontiguous counties and sets them up as a single call center. Calls coming into the 800 number are distributed via a unified call center solution on a round robin basis among the seven counties. Agency staff members assigned to the call center perform specific transactions on a case versus seeing a single case all the way through to determination. Through a process termed "case banking" case managers no longer have assigned caseloads, but rather work on cases as needed in real time by accessing a digital case bank. This allows counties to utilize full capacity of staff when and where it is needed. Essentially, the program combines the staff potential of multiple counties into one single entity that manages cases in real time.

An investment of just under $2 million of both state costs and county costs combined indicates that this program is easily replicated in other counties and can be just as beneficial. The efficiency of the Collabor8 system goes far beyond traditional methods, as 99% of application calls are answered within 30 seconds with an average hold time of 5 seconds during any week of calls. An increase in efficiency and productivity results in a return on taxpayer investment. To date, counties have seen a 30% increase in productivity which translates to $1,530,000 per year when expressed in the cost of labor.

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Information Technology

G2g Cloud Solutions
Oakland County, MI
Population: 1,203,012

The current information technology market trend today is geared towards cloud computing solutions. Businesses and communities that have adopted a cloud computing network have found it to be extremely beneficial as they can access information anywhere, anytime. In 2011, Oakland County launched G2G Cloud Solutions, a cloud infrastructure set up to support technology sharing among governments via the web.

Through G2G Cloud Solutions, Oakland County can further leverage its IT solutions to benefit other municipalities, helping to achieve lower governmental operating costs for all. G2G Cloud Solutions enables governments to use enterprise IT applications and services on an as-needed basis, reducing operating costs for participating governments. Through G2G, Oakland County has been making a wide array of applications available not only to its local municipalities, but also any other government who wishes to use the technology. G2G Cloud Solutions also allows other governments to add their applications to the same cloud, to further share technology solutions with each other. As a government-backed and controlled system, G2G Cloud Solutions ensures that market fluctuations will not affect the stability of technology solutions and investments. Furthermore, information on the cloud is more secure on G2G than it would be on a private server. Currently, G2G Cloud Solutions offers two services, being an online payment system and a cloud publishing application. Online Payments enables a government to accept web-based payments for traffic tickets, court fines, utility bills, property taxes,

and so on. The Web Publishing Suite provides governments with a complete web site management solution to help create and maintain a government web presence.

G2G Cloud Solutions efficiently leverages existing technologies, paired with the calculated expansion of web service delivery methods, resulting in lower-than-average costs. Total development costs for the current phase of G2G were $147,108. Tangible benefits are projected to be more than $1.4 million in the first five years, with a projected cost avoidance of more than $740,000 in the first five years. Results of the G2G program have been outstanding, as the cloud network has reduced operational costs and time constraints for other governments. Governments using G2G Cloud Solutions' Online Payments service achieve operational cost reductions through streamlined payment processing and benefit from increased payment collections. The governments currently participating in G2G Cloud Solutions have recorded a combined total of $144,713 in revenue from Online Payments alone to date.

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One-Maryland Inter-County Broadband Network

Howard County, MD
Population: 288,376

After the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), many counties across the country began to receive grants from the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) established by the Federal Government. This program provides counties with money directed towards building broadband networks to increase connectivity, particularly in rural areas. The state of Maryland received a $115 million grant from BTOP, with Howard County securing $72 million of the funds. With the money from this grant, Howard County started their One-Maryland Inter-County Broadband Network (ICBN) program.

A collaborative effort between multiple counties, communities, and private businesses, Howard County is seeking to provide higher quality, lower cost broadband connectivity to key anchor institutions and community partners such as libraries, public schools, colleges, community centers, and public housing. ICBN exists to facilitate public safety interoperable communications, reduce operational costs for all government communications, serve as a catalyst for economic development, and encourage public-private partnerships through open access, dark fiber availability. When computers are networked together under ICBN, they are interconnected by communication channels that allow for a sharing of resources and information. The ICBN will allow computers from a myriad of hospitals, schools, public-safety operations, and libraries to be networked together – something that they are not able to do with the current bandwidth and cost-restraints they are under. Cloud computing is another technology that will

further innovation, giving businesses and families reliable and easy access to virtually infinite storage.

Currently, the ICBN is in its engineering and construction phase. However, once completed, each ICBN jurisdiction is expected to save more than $28 million annually, as the current infrastructure is antiquated and costly. For instance, Howard Community College will be able to eliminate the high costs of network services between the Laurel College Center and the other campuses of the Howard and Prince George's community colleges and devote more resources to education. Being that the cost of this project is paid for by a $72 million federal grant, the county will benefit greatly from the construction and implementation of the One-Maryland Inter-County Broadband Network.

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Libraries

Community Partnerships Create Invigorated Library Services
Washington County, MN
Population: 238,844

As a result of the economic downturn, counties have been taking a second look at the expenditures and necessity of community libraries. Many counties have begun shutting down libraries in municipalities that do not meet a high enough population threshold to justify their continued use. However, governments such as Washington County continue to promote public education and access to library materials, even when a brick-and-mortar building is not present in the community. Washington County began their Community Partnerships program to provide library materials to citizens of all municipalities across the region.

The county has partnered with communities that do not have access to a library through constructive dialogue. As a result of this dialogue, communities have created reading rooms within their city hall, defunct library, or other community buildings. These reading rooms are not full service libraries but they do contain books and games donated by the community. However, these reading rooms also boast the main aspect of Washington County's program: an inter-community library computer kiosk. From this kiosk, citizens can request books, music, movies, and other library materials from other libraries that can be shuttled to the kiosk location. The requesting individual is then given a code to a locker where they can access the library materials once they are delivered. The lockers are available to individuals at any hour of the day, any day of the week. The kiosk-locker system has proven to be very efficient and beneficial to communities that do not have direct access to a library.

With a capital cost of only $65,000 for the installation of the kiosk-locker system, the only other charges required to implement this extremely beneficial program cover the operation of a shuttle between libraries to provide materials requested by residents. Being that this system is much more affordable than building and maintaining a physical library, it can be very beneficial for counties that need to bring library resources to both low-income and low-population communities.

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Parks And Recreation

Usery Mountain Home School Programs

Maricopa County, AZ
Population: 3,827,371

With the future in mind, counties are always looking for ways to increase access to educational materials for our nation's youth. At the same time, some families become victims of the recession and have no other option but to move around the country from place to place, looking for jobs. The transient nature of many hard-hit families results in an increasing number of children being home-schooled. Maricopa County has realized this dilemma, and continues to provide increasing access to educational materials for these families. Through the Usery Mountain Home School Program, Maricopa County has partnered with the Arizona Science Center to provide hands-on educational classes directed at home-schooled students.

Through the program, children and their parents can attend a wide array of classes on many science-related topics. The classes, which adhere to Arizona state education standards, take place at the Usery Mountain nature park. There, students receive interactive lectures from park rangers and experience a classroom environment. All of the classes incorporate a high degree of experiential learning, as the students are allowed to examine, dissect, and experience first-hand different organisms and aspects of the local ecology. After the lecture, students are taken into the dessert to again experience what they just learned in the classroom. Classes are typically small, with pre-registration required and a cap of about ten to fifteen students per class. In accordance with the Arizona Science Center and the Maricopa County Board of Directors, there is a $6 automobile and a $15 to $20 class fee per student.

The program has proven to be an extremely valuable asset to families that home school their children. The Usery Mountain Home School program provides a classroom and real world environment to students that otherwise learn in their parent's living room. To date, a total of 19 programs have been hosted and attended by 422 individuals. Even more telling is the fact that nearly two thirds of these attendees were repeat visitors, indicating that the visitors both rely heavily on the classes and they thoroughly enjoy them. Being that programs are offered during the staffs normal work schedules, pay adjustments and overtime pay situations are avoided, meaning that operating the program incurs no additional cost to the county. The Usery Mountain Home School program is an easily replicable educational plan that would benefit any county across the nation.

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Personnel Management

Results Only Work Environment

Hennepin County, MN
Population: 1,154,623

Often, county employees find themselves over-stressed and unable to do their work. While deadlines and structure for completing projects are always important, it is also important to occasionally take a holistic approach towards ones workload. In Hennepin County, the Human Services and Public Health Department (HSPHD) implemented their Results Only Work Environment (ROWE) program to encourage employees to work on a schedule that works best for them.

In a ROWE, employees determine how they work best as a team, and as individuals, to meet the needs of the customers they serve. Employees are able to streamline processes, utilize technology and achieve a balance between their professional and personal lives. They are not bound by outdated rules and expectations of the traditional work environment, and are encouraged to develop and implement innovative ideas to provide better services to the clients and customers in Hennepin County. To implement this program, Hennepin County received a state grant to contract with CultureRx, a firm that trains work forces to adopt a ROWE system. CultureRx defines a ROWE as an environment in which people can do whatever they want, whenever they want, as long as the work gets done. In a ROWE, each job has concrete goals and expectations. How the work gets done is up to the employee, but performance is measured by results. However, HSPHD workers are government employees and must work 40 hours per week or 80 hours per pay period (depending on job status). Although employees maintain a traditional work schedule, the essential requirements of a job

shapes when the work may occur. Some job tasks allow an employee to work remotely or outside of traditional office hours. For tasks that must be accomplished in certain locations, work units can collaborate as a team to build in flexibility.

Contracting with CultureRx to train ROWE employees was paid for through a state grant. Statistical analysis of the results is currently underway, but one team in Adult Protection reported they have dramatically and consistently improved services since migrating to a ROWE. Another team, the Central Imaging Unit, which scans documentation needed to determine eligibility for public assistance programs, reported increased productivity by 33% in a ROWE. A third team, who determines eligibility, reported increased productivity in processing applications for clients to receive services.

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Planning

Se 172nd Ave / Se 190th Drive Corridor Management Plan

Clackamas County, OR
Population: 376,891

As communities expand on a daily basis, counties are continually dealing with increases in population. Often, the transportation infrastructure in these areas cannot keep up with the increase in population, as the construction of a new road or public transportation track requires a great deal of time and money. Clackamas County, which serves the rural suburbs of Portland, Oregon, began a management plan to prepare the region for an anticipated increase in population. Currently, there is a very weak north-to-south transportation route for these booming suburbs.

Clackamas County launched their SE 172nd Ave / SE 190th Drive Corridor Management Plan to prepare a north-to-south transportation project for the region. The county knew that construction and implementation would not begin for a number of years due to budgetary constraints, so they initiated a collaborative effort with communities that exist in the affected corridor. Starting with town hall meetings, the county sought to increase dialogue with the community to determine the best route to take in order to prepare plans for an environmentally conscious, efficient, affordable, and beneficial north-to-south roadway. The community was heavily involved with the plan, as the county hosted a number of community workshops, online tutorials, and open house events. Statistical analysis presented during the dialogue phase indicated the time-frame that the county had to plan and construct the roadway. The county expects the area to be heavily urbanized by 2035. To prepare, the county, in cooperation with the local communities, has determined that construction should begin sometime around 2016.

The $2 million cost of this project covered planning, research, modeling, mapping, public involvement, web and social media, publications and personnel. However, this project was an excellent and relatively rare example of planning a major roadway in advance of urban levels of development with a substantial input from the residents of the area. By taking the time and resources to work with government partners, the business and development community and the public, the county now has a generally accepted, understood and approved plan to provided needed transportation connectivity in this rapidly-growing portion of the Portland metropolitan area.

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Best Rural Program

Historic Past, Sustainable Future: The 2009 Comprehensive Plan

James City County, VA
Population: 67,237

Being the fifth fastest growing county in Virginia, the historically rural James City County has been under pressure to develop a management plan to prepare for the future. With a 160% population growth in recent years, the county has seen nearly 1,500 residential units approved through rezoning cases since their last comprehensive plan in 2003. While the population growth may be exciting for the local economy, James City County has also had to direct concern towards preserving their history and valuable properties.

In November of 2009 the Board of Supervisors adopted the 2009 James City County Comprehensive Plan, Historic Past, Sustainable Future. The 2009 Plan is built on the successes of past comprehensive plans and is inclusive of the knowledge, expertise, and input of county citizens, businesses, consultants, interest groups, committees, and staff. The collaborative, multi-jurisdictional input of this plan resulted in a community-based decision. Starting with the development of a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Schedule, officials were able to detail priorities, goals, deadlines, and information through a universally accessible portfolio. Compiled using input from the community, James City County identified a few key priorities that must be established in their comprehensive plan: Preserving the past, and sustaining the future. The community is accepting and is excited for an increase in population but still desires to preserve historic neighborhoods. Utilizing their Comprehensive Plan Implementation Schedule which was created by community dialogue, the county was able to set the

stage for transparent and trackable implementation. For the first time, an implementation guide and schedule is included in the plan to increase County accountability. The guide succinctly outlines the role of the comprehensive plan and its relationships to other County service plans and documents such as the budget and strategic management plans.

The passage of the comprehensive plan was a great success for both the community and the county government. Being a community-based collaborative plan, citizens are very pleased with the future of their county. Over the course of 26 months, operating costs included consultants for survey administration ($26,000), legally required and supplemental newspaper advertisements ($6,000), other supplies for meetings and handouts ($4,000), and consultants for transportation modeling and land use application evaluation ($150,000). Being that counties can satisfy these requirements through existing government resources, any county can replicate James City County's management plan.

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