COVID-19 County Technology Efforts
Results of Tech Xchange Discussion

Area	Description
Telework	Many are increasing the ability for county staff to telework. This includes: • Deploying Laptops • We have stalled our PC refresh and Win10 conversion to make laptops available if necessary • Ensuring VPN is on end user equipment and • VPN connection capacity increased • Identifying staff that may need a mi-fi or hot spot (i.e. rural areas in county) • Reviewing county remote work connection documentation to ensure everything is up to date and easy to use. • Planning for a remote work capacity test within our Citrix current infrastructure soon. Our vendors who support our Citrix environment are aware of our needs and are aligned to help and support the county as needed. • We are preparing to expand our virtual desktop • As for telework, we are also obtaining additional security tokens for the expected increase in the number of County Staff needing VPN access, ensuring the VPN gateways are ready, • Ensuring the Internet pipes have enough bandwidth, • Ensuring we have a pool of laptops to use for Staff to check-out for remote working and confirming a process for physically "sanitizing" any such laptop used for this purpose upon its return by the County Staff member. • Preparations for reminding staff about how to connect to our systems for remote work are underway and counts of how many remote workers we will have are being reviewed • We have a mandate from our Executive to require people who can, to bring tech home with them each night and test their systems. • We will be implementing rolling work from home days by agency over the next week to push these tests forward. • We issued an email to all department heads urging them to have all employees with WFH capabilities to test their tools and connections now, before it becomes urgent. This includes verifying VPN and MFA processed and credentials, practicing steps for establishing conference bridges, WebEx sessions, etc. • We are reviewing work at home options by comparing what other counties are doing via statewide discussion forum.
Telework Policy	• Updated the county telework policy and implemented a new county teleworking policy. • The current county telework policy here requires the County Commissioners Court's approval for a Staff member to be regularly scheduled for

	telework. In light of, however, the COVD19 event, the County is looking at streamlining the approval process so that Department Heads can approve their applicable Department Staff to telework as needed, based on their either being exposed to someone with the virus or having to care for someone who may be ill or in isolation for this reason. Sometimes no one in the Staff member's home may be ill or exposed, however, if, let's say, the school for their minor dependent children shuts down in response to the COVD19 event, then we are preparing the telework option for that contingency as well.
Staff Work Alternatives	• We have begun conversations on how to develop alternative work for users that may need to stay home that do not have county laptops available. We are looking into online training opportunities that people can opt-in with a home computer. We're also considering repurposing some desktops tagged for recycle with inexpensive desk scanners and providing workers with an opportunity to work on county document archiving. At this point these are just ideas, but we are prepping. One of the challenges we are realizing is that some users work in departments that don't have "work from home" opportunities such as the Recorder, License Bureau, Land Records, Property Tax, Assessor offices. These are offices that generally require assisting customers inside the government building or visiting user property in the Assessor's case. These are the cases in which we are considering alternate workload options such as digital document archiving or online training/certifications. • We are making plans to redirect IT staff for extra help desk, Teams and voice communications support.
Equipment	• We have pre-ordered our laptop replacement inventory and will be holding to identify if we need to reallocate within our business departments to higher priorities based on the needs. • accelerating laptop refreshes • Planning for a drop off process for PC/Laptops that need repairs during this time if workers will mainly be working from home. • We are also encouraging departments to make more use of collaboration tools • We are purchasing an additional Citrix licensing and partitioning additional virtual server space to support a potential large number of remote workers. • We are moving all our PC refresh procurements this year to laptop/docking stations. • We are purchasing Cisco wireless IP phones for remote users to connect back to our CUCM. • have collected laptops that aren't in use and have prepared them for remote access.
Education	• Doing some specific COVID-19 phish awareness messaging and phish testing • Educating countywide employees on trying out their external access ability and making sure the applications/services/data they need and 2FA are all working before they need it... • We have streamlined our on-boarding process for remote network access, multi-facto authentication and VPN

	• Phishing Tests: Several weeks ago, we issued a phishing simulation with "coronavirus tips" as a topic. The response rate was almost double that because people are very concerned about this virus. As soon as the news was released about our presumptive positive case, we saw a massive uptick in spear-phishing campaigns posing as "quarantine guidelines" and similar topics from bogus CDC and WHO and Health Dept accounts.
Communications	• Implementing or creating a listserv of department heads, elected officials, courts, etc. for communicating key updates • Identifying the need for digital signage to communicate information for public in various departments. • Asking the business lines for any special needs which is integrated into their business that needs technical planning – accessing cloud apps, queuing equipment, conferencing with public, etc. • Reminder of where to check for technology updates and stressing the importance of calling the service desk number for technical help. • Our measured MS TEAMS rollout is now on hyper acceleration • Adding a banner to our public web site with a link to our state department of health coronavirus page, rather than trying to maintain our information there. • Communications to staff and citizens have been flowing for several days, with daily updates. • One additional technology item to note, we are using this as an opportunity to try out our first **chatbot**. We had been looking for a good use case and this one presented itself. We are developing a chatbot to be used on our intranet. • We established a dedicated section on our intranet site to share the latest relevant and useful content. We issued a message of reassurance from the County Manager to all employees, which included emphasis on using this intranet site as the single source of employee resources during the event. Resources on the site currently include an FAQ specific to County operations, resources for employees (i.e. our health care insurance provider has telemedicine capabilities if you feel like you may be showing symptoms) and the latest policy and practice changes related to COVID19. So far, that has included Exposure Prevention and Reporting Guidelines, modifications to our travel policy and quick links to all our collaboration, telework and remote conferencing tools. I anticipate that this site will grow rapidly in the coming weeks. • Survey went out to dept directors about the needs of technology need of essential employees.
Third Party Vendors	• Communicating with our vendors and other essential IT support services to ensure we have their commitment to our technical needs. We are also looking at areas we may need a secondary vendor ready for capacity or technical resources • Discussing a managed service technical call center to be ready for calls if needed.

	• seeing a lot of new requests for Zoom business accounts, especially in the public and behavioral health areas as it is somewhat HIPAA compliant for remote counseling/therapy sessions • We have pre-purchased a block of hours from a managed services vendor for network support in the case our limited amount of Network Techs become ill. • We have also reached out to our major partners: Cisco, Microsoft, and HP. They have all been willing to help and provide support as needed. • We have contacted vendors and suppliers, putting them on notice we may need quick service.
Planning	• As the CIO or IT Director, are you on the county planning team? If not, you need to be. • Reviewing pandemic plan for inclusion of technology such as access to county network resources and priority of such. • Reminding our IT staff of the importance of our role and the need for technology during this time. • Reviewing and understanding the role in the pandemic planning document within IT. • Reviewing phone capabilities for options available to help with any departments which need different capability for our residents. • Using a skills matrix intended to help in succession planning and being sure we have some depth in various areas. I also plan to ask staff to do a self-assessment using the tool to help me identify hidden talents that I might have overlooked. • Succession Plan – I am trying to go at least 3 deep and work with our HR department to ensure we all agree on what would be done in various scenarios, so we don't have to haggle over details during a crisis. • IT Pre-Epidemic Plan – This is a plan to be activated when there is a risk of outbreak, epidemic or pandemic illness. It is intended primarily as a review of our epidemic response plan, inventory of equipment, applying updates to equipment / preparing it for remote use, inventory of safety supplies as they apply to us, review of supply chains, testing of key capabilities to support a remote workforce and, generally, beginning to "batten down the hatches". • IT Epidemic Response Plan – Officially shifts all IT focus to maintaining key systems and services. Disable unnecessary services to reduce our attack surface. Includes a set of IT support priorities to help IT staff know where best to direct their efforts and to help other departments understand the choices we make. So far, we have defined those priorities as network, voice/telephony, public health / public safety departments and Finance, with a focus on the systems they require for day-to-day operations. We are following our Pre-Epidemic Plan now and preparing for the possibility of needing to implement the Epidemic Response Plan. • We're defining regular testing of plans and After-Action Reviews for all activations and tests of these plans.

	• We are adjusting all our Disaster Recovery plans to incorporate supporting a large number of remote workers. • County is preparing and planning in coordination with the County Executive Office, Department of Behavioral and Community Health (DBCH) and Emergency Response (ER). • We are attempting to message as much as possible through our Public Health Director, a medical doctor, in concert with Emergency Management and the County Manager. • We also early on implemented our Incident Command structure and opened our EOC at the lowest level of monitoring. All resources and personnel are coordinating with each other, cities and towns within the County, and the State via WebEoC, easily accessible through any internet-connected computer.
Websites	• www.dutchessny.gov/coronavirus • https://www.pittcountync.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=645 • https://www.chesterfield.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=1243 • http://www.wakegov.com/covid19/Pages/default.aspx

Other General Comments:

- Our IT planning is focused one step at time to help our business users (who may not be technical) with actionable steps so we don't overwhelm them with requests.

- We have a Pandemic plan which states our priorities based on State Statues and County Business and mostly related to life safety and essential services. We are reviewing with our business the county employees……

- Barry Condrey, CIO for Chesterfield County, VA participated in a NASCIO/PTI/COMPTia sponsored webinar. He covered several critical responses counties can take to address technology during challenges like COVID-19.
  Here is the recording:
  https://comptia.webex.com/recordingservice/sites/comptia/recording/d78121f46ea140a9b223a34ca1de5764
  And here are the slides: https://www.comptia.org/docs/default-source/event-docs/on-demand-webinars/covid-19_march2020.pdf?sfvrsn=dea7ceb4_2

- Is anyone looking at new approaches to analytics on this problem out there?
  Specifically, I am asking if there is anything connecting social distancing (SD) policy effectiveness in stopping transmission of Coronavirus to the most vulnerable considering (correlating) the health and economic impacts from social distancing.
  The fear and panic seem to be fueled by only having information on the spread. But people aren't seeing the socioeconomic impact of SD on small business failures, wage and retirement loss, the tipping of the most vulnerable into homelessness (or loss of services to those already homeless) and more. It feels like social organ failure in trying to stop a disease. Can we prove or disprove that theory?
  We need eyes on the problem in new ways.