

2011 NASCIO Recognition Award Application
Cross-Boundary Collaboration and Partnerships



West Virginia Office of Technology
Statewide Local E-Government Implementation & Adoption

West Virginia Office of Technology
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▪ THANKS TO E-GOVERNMENT IN WEST VIRGINIA PARTNERS ▪

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WEST VIRGINIA
Department of
EDUCATION

B. Executive Summary

West Virginia is comprised of 55 counties with more than 230 municipalities. Due to the economic conditions of the state, most local governments function on a very limited budget and do not have the resources (budget and personnel) to build or sustain a web presence. The Statewide Local E-Government Implementation & Adoption Program was conceived as a means to grow West Virginia's local government web presence through a coordinated investment of public and private resources. In 2007, when this project started, less than 50% of county governments and less than 20% of municipal governments had an established web presence.

The West Virginia Office of Technology (WVOT), partnered with the West Virginia Municipal League (WVML), the West Virginia Association of Counties (WVACO), the Community Connect Foundation (CCF), and the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), to begin the process of creating a statewide portal for all county and municipal governments. Our goal was to implement and promote E-Government applications and seek ways to ensure participation from all local governments providing services to our citizens.

Through a collaborative effort, a new curriculum for public high school students was created that combined civics education and technology training. This program enabled students to have the opportunity to get out of the classroom and become actively engaged with local government. Through this program, students interacted directly with their local government officials. The information collected through this process was ultimately used to build local government websites. Each participating high school was provided with the technology resources needed to capture the information collected through interviews with public officials, independent online research and input from project partner WVACO.

WVOT provided funding for the hardware and software needed at the high schools, as well as cloud based web hosting services and professional project management. During Phase I of this project, six high schools were selected to begin the E-Government Implementation & Adoption Program. Due to the overwhelming success of the program at these targeted schools, the project has now expanded into a statewide initiative.

“The mission of this partnership is to assist our county and municipal governments in developing and sustaining a local government web presence in order to keep our citizenry better informed. We will achieve this mission by leveraging our state’s most valuable resource, our youth”.

-Kyle Schafer, Chief Technology Officer WV

C. Description

In early 2007, the WVOT partnered with CCF to provide assistance in developing project plans for, what seemed to be at the time, three separate and very different initiatives.

The goals of these initiatives were:

- Work with counties and municipalities to increase their web presence. At that time, less than 50% of all West Virginia counties and less than 20% of all municipalities had a web presence. When questioned, counties and municipalities indicated the primary reason for not having a web presence was cost.
- Assist the Department of Education with the integration of new 21st Century Technical Skills into the classroom – specifically, develop a plan to integrate classroom technology with real life situations.
- Work with the Broadband Council to develop E-Government applications that will help promote broadband demand and keep our citizenry better informed.

The WVOT presented a single project plan to address all three initiatives. Specifically, CCF in conjunction with WVOT, applied for, and was awarded grant funding for the development of a Statewide Local E-Government Implementation & Adoption Program that would interject 21st century technology skills into the school's current civics curriculum. CCF communicated the project initiatives through the WVACO and WVML, and also visited every participating school. Each school then reached out to their local officials. Schools were provided laptops loaded with Microsoft Office productivity tools, digital cameras and video recorders, and charged with working with locally elected officials to develop E-Government websites for their respective counties and municipalities at no cost to that government entity.

Six municipalities involving six high schools were covered by the initial grant. The new Statewide Local E-Government Implementation & Adoption Program curriculum was introduced into these schools in September 2007. Due to the widespread popularity of this program, grants were approved in April 2008 to broaden the program to include an additional 138 counties and municipalities. Grant dollars were awarded to CCF to expand this program to all remaining high schools across the state and the remaining 124 counties and municipalities. By end of year 2010, all 55 counties in West Virginia had sustainable websites for citizen engagement.

As a bonus, in March 2011, additional grant funding was awarded to the CCF to further streamline the program processes and ensure the accuracy and sustainability of the county and municipality websites developed under this program. This includes the

annual updating of websites by the participating high school students and the implementation of additional interactive applications to further enhance the delivery of local government services.

The concept of incorporating 21st century technology into school civics curriculum and adding value to local governments has gained full support from the current and previous administration.

“Developing partnerships among our schools and our government offices is a win-win for everyone involved. These partnerships are an excellent way to help our towns with limited resources develop websites that can serve their citizens and reach out to the world. It’s also a great learning tool for our students, who build their skills while finding creative ways to help us all. I can think of no better way to promote the best kept secret in America; West Virginia”.

-US Senator Joe Manchin III, Former Governor

The WVOT provided, at no cost, professional project management and hosting services for all counties and municipalities participating in this program. WVOT utilizes its E-Government partner to provide cloud based hosting for the project. High school civics students are supplied with the equipment and resources by the CCF needed to engage in hands-on activities with local elected officials.

- E-GOVERNMENT IN WEST VIRGINIA -
Bringing information to "the People" via the internet

CITIZENS INTERACT WITH THEIR CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS ONLINE

The Community Connect Foundation (CCF), the WV Department of Education, the Regional Education Service Agency, the WV Association of County Officials, the WV Municipal League, and the WV Office of Technology have partnered to create county and municipality government websites branching from the WVGOV state portal website. This new portal allows citizens and local government to interact more effectively.

The project, which will take several years to deploy statewide, was first launched as a pilot in six cities and their counties to allow a process to develop for smooth implementation and maintenance.

Already online, the WVGOV website helps citizens interact with local government agencies, such as city and county administrations. A total population of 157,376 citizens has already been impacted by the pilot project with another 1.6 million plus citizens in the remaining 49 counties.

Outreach meetings are being held throughout the state to discuss the project, ways to use websites and the state's portal. People who attend outreach meetings will learn about the advantages and cost savings associated with the deployment of government applications. As an incentive to participate the designated cities/counties will receive a license for Microsoft Office Professional software.

STUDENTS GAIN EXPERIENCE WITH LEADERSHIP AND WEB DEVELOPMENT

High school students will help shape the information that will be provided through the new state portal. High school students were very effective during the big work to gather data in each pilot area. School districts are developing lesson plans that will teach the students interviewing skills and techniques for collecting information, photos and video content for the website, along with how to design and update webpages.

Students participating in the agreement project have access to laptops, computers, digital and video cameras, and use of other tools that will assist them in accomplishing their tasks. Each school district will determine the level of course credit or community service student participants will earn. CCF purchases equipment suitable to meet the students' needs. Upon completion of the project, the equipment becomes school property.

Each participating city provides a liaison to work with the students. This person coordinates schedules for interviews and photo/video shoots, and coordinates the review and approval of appropriate officials. The intent of new local government websites is to promote the city and county, provide information to the public, and provide basic citizen to government interaction tools.

Concerns of keeping the website information current are addressed by allowing civic classes to use the project as a vehicle to teach Content Standards and Objectives (CSOs), Learning Skills, and Technology Tool Usage required by their curriculum. New students become responsible for updating the site each year.

Electronic distribution of information and conducting transactions on the internet provides substantial cost savings to local governments. And citizens quickly see the benefits of 24/7 availability of online services. CCF is committed to helping elected officials and community leaders become familiar with and implement e-government applications.

For more information or to become a sponsor or partner contact the Community Connect Foundation at www.CommunityConnectFoundation.org.

COMMUNITY CONNECT FOUNDATION
116 So. 25th
Martinsburg, WV 25401
Tel: (304) 261-1318
www.CommunityConnectFoundation.org

The following equipment has been provided to the participating high schools in all 55 counties of West Virginia:

- Laptop PC and case with Microsoft Windows OS and Office Professional
- Digital Video Camcorder with case and accessories

- **Digital Camera with case and accessories**

The first six high schools started collecting content for their respective counties and municipalities in September of 2007, with the first websites being completed in the fall of 2008. In February 2011, CCF and current Governor Earl Ray Tomblin held a press conference during the WVACO annual meeting acknowledging the successful publishing of an E-Government website for every county in West Virginia.

D. Significance

This program would not have experienced the level of success it has achieved without the collaboration of many organizations. As with most cross-boundary initiatives, the most significant hurdle was obtaining consensus from all the various stakeholders. In order to gain support and begin implementing the project plan, several steps had to be taken:

- WVOT and CCF collaborated with the WVDE to combine civics education with 21st Century Technical Skills.
- WVOT and CCF ensured that this project would allow civics, community service and technology skills to be embraced by local high school students.
- WVOT and CCF presented project information to the WVML and gained support for the project.
- WVOT and CCF presented project information to the WVACO and gained support for the project.
- WVOT and CCF submitted and received multiple grants from The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.
- Due to the overwhelming demand and success of this project, WVOT and CCF have received additional grants from AT&T and Verizon.
- WVOT and CCF created Memorandums of Understanding from all partners to ensure project sustainability.

The following is a site developed by High School students from one of West Virginia's most rural and isolated counties, Pocahontas County, for the City of Hillsboro.

west virginia State Agency Directory | Online Services Search This Site

Hillsboro, West Virginia

- About Us
- City Code
- Council and Board
- Meetings
- Elected Officials
- Employment
- Events
- Lists
- Press Releases
- Recreation
- Services
- Utilities

Did You Know?

Famous writer Pearl S. Buck was born in Hillsboro in 1892.



Welcome to Hillsboro, West Virginia

The town of Hillsboro is located in the Southern end of Pocahontas County, West Virginia and is the county's oldest incorporated town. Hillsboro was chartered in 1886. The town is named after Richard Hill of North Carolina; the name was later changed to Academy, but was soon restored to the original and current name.

Hillsboro is a historic location in Pocahontas County. It is not only the oldest incorporated town in the county, it is also home to famous author Pearl S. Buck. The original home of Pearl S. Buck is still standing today. Tours of this house are offered throughout the year.

Hillsboro is known as the center of the Little Levels. To help preserve the town's deep history, a festival known as the "Little Levels Heritage Fair" is held annually. More information about the festival can be found in the Events section of this website.

Hillsboro is nearby many different recreational activities. For more information on these activities, see the Recreation portion of this website.

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Students from Pocahontas High School created the website for the City of Hillsboro at no cost to the municipality. No content is uploaded or changed on the site without the consent of the mayor of Hillsboro. Each new participating class coming into Pocahontas High School will be responsible for enhancing and ensuring the accuracy of the E-Government website.

Since much more information is available, citizens from the rural Hillsboro community are much better informed than before. Much of the information is now available to them 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Citizens also play a role in the ongoing enhancement of the site by making their requests online.

Although counties, municipalities and citizens are seeing tremendous value in this program, students are the real winners. From an educational perspective, students from Pocahontas High School interview city officials and create content for this site. Before this project began, many students did not know and were not familiar with their local government officials or the services they provide. By participating in the Statewide Local E-Government Implementation & Adoption Program, students enhanced their

knowledge of local government through face-to-face interviews with local officials. They have also enhanced their technology skills by utilizing digital cameras, digital video recorders and various software tools to capture and digitize content necessary to provide a useful and sustainable E-Government web presence.

E. Benefit of the Project

More and more, individuals are depending on technology to access accurate, timely and reliable government information. It is imperative that state, county and local governments recognize this shift, and strive to accommodate our citizenry. Although most of our elected officials recognize the need, many of the counties and municipalities in West Virginia did not have the financial or technical resources needed to accomplish this goal prior to the implementation of this program. Implementation has increased demand for enhanced broadband deployment, utilized cloud hosting for its solution, and has provided significant cost control through cost avoidance – three of the top 10 NASCIO State CIO objectives for 2011.

In the beginning, we thought the primary beneficiary of this project would be our citizens, but as this initiative matured, we now see that the students involved in this program are receiving significant value. The students involved with this program have fully embraced the technology and through their own innovation have created some very remarkable websites. Former First Lady Gayle Manchin, received a DVD from Nitro High School, which documented their website development project for the City of Nitro. She was so impressed by the accomplishments of these students that she presented the DVD to the West Virginia Jobs Cabinet. From this video, it is clear that our students have developed advanced technology skills that were used to solve real life issues. It is also apparent that they have learned a tremendous amount of information about our political process. These are all skills that will be transferable to all of their future endeavors. The total investment in the program through grants has been \$410,000. The benefit to the Counties, Municipalities and students through increased citizenry participation and development of technical skills is invaluable.

This project has been particularly challenging and unique due to the sheer number of stakeholders, but none of these stakeholders would question the success and benefit of the final result. Students are now able to participate in their local governments and gain a better understanding of government and technology. Citizens of these communities are better informed and elected officials are providing a service that is in high demand from their constituents. This project has truly been a Win, Win, Win for all project partners.