

# Statewide Local E-Government Implementation and Adoption Program



**NASCIO Staff Contact:**  
**Eric Sweden, MSIH MBA**  
Program Director,  
Enterprise Architecture &  
Governance  
NASCIO

NASCIO represents state chief information officers and information technology executives and managers from state governments across the United States. For more information visit [www.nascio.org](http://www.nascio.org).

201 East Main Street, Suite 1405  
Lexington, KY 40507  
Phone: (859) 514-9153  
Fax: (859) 514-9166  
[NASCIO@AMRms.com](mailto:NASCIO@AMRms.com)  
[www.NASCIO.org](http://www.NASCIO.org)

Copyright © 2012 NASCIO  
All rights reserved

## ***Project Initiation and completion date***

This project began in early 2007 and is scheduled to be completed in November 2012.

In 2007, the West Virginia Office of Technology (WVOT) reached out to community organizations to help with the deployment and adoption of e-government services for West Virginia counties and municipalities. With the then recent redesign of the WV State Portal and the increased e-government offerings available through the WVOT's public-private partnership with NIC West Virginia Interactive (WVI), the WVOT saw a unique opportunity to engage counties and municipalities in a project to increase their online presence, enhance the delivery of local government services and further promote government transparency.

To pursue this goal, it was necessary to conduct a strategic analysis of the current status of e-government promotion and adoption. The results of this analysis showed there was an opportunity for improvement. Approximately 50% of counties and 75% of incorporated municipalities did not have a viable, informative, sustainable website in which to house e-government applications. This lack of web presence among local government entities presented the WVOT with a challenging environment to pursue e-government initiatives. Additional research revealed that a high percentage of young voters in West Virginia were disengaged and uninformed about the operation and structure of their local government. There was also a general lack of understanding by government officials about what defines an e-government application and how these applications could be utilized to increase government efficiency.

Following the analysis, the WVOT partnered with the Community Connect Foundation, a local technology non-profit organization that specializes in e-government promotion and adoption, the WV Association of Counties, the WV Municipal League and the WV Department of Education (WVDE) to develop a comprehensive strategy. This strategy was designed to increase the online presence of counties and municipalities while engaging and educating high school students, local elected officials and citizens about the value of e-government services. The resulting partnership led to the development of the Statewide Local E-Government Implementation and Adoption Program. (Hereafter referred to as the Local E-Government Program).

Through funding from the WVOT and the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, the Local E-Government Program initially pursued a free professional e-government website for six counties and six municipalities in West Virginia. High school students were selected from six counties to participate in the collection of information for the websites as part of the civic curriculum required by the WVDE. This unique combination of website development, education and community engagement allowed the WVOT to inform students and citizens about the value of e-government applications while providing communities with the necessary tools and environment to deliver applications. The project model also allowed counties and municipalities, which have very limited technical knowledge and financial resources, to develop free professional websites without the financial burdened. Due to the success and interest generated by this pilot project, additional grant funding was obtained to deploy this program to every county, municipality and high school in West Virginia.

To date, the partnership has resulted in the publishing of more than 125 e-government websites. Through a strategic process of engagement and education the WVOT has a verified official E-Government presence for 100% of West Virginia counties and more than 85% of incorporated municipalities, many of which are embracing additional E-Government applications as a way to better serve their citizens. Grant funding for this project is slated to expire November 30, 2012. Sustainability models have been deployed by project partners to ensure the websites created through this project remain current.

### **Organization and primary point of contact**

Grant Facilitator  
 Community Connect Foundation  
 PO Box 3756  
 Charleston, WV 25337  
[www.communityconnectfoundation.org](http://www.communityconnectfoundation.org)

Project Name  
 Statewide Local E-Government Implementation & Adoption Program  
 Project Manger  
 Jonathan Price  
[jprice@rdumg.com](mailto:jprice@rdumg.com)  
 Phone: 304-638-8319  
 Fax: 734-264-1774

#### **Grant Funders**

Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation  
 223 Fourth Ave. 14th Floor  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
[www.benedum.org](http://www.benedum.org)

WV Office of Technology  
 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East Capitol Complex - Building 5, 10th Floor  
 Charleston, WV 25305  
[www.technology.wv.gov](http://www.technology.wv.gov)

#### **Grant Funder Manager**

Mary Hunt-Lieving  
 Senior Program Officer  
[mhunt@benedum.org](mailto:mhunt@benedum.org)

Sue Ann Lipinski  
 Information Services Director  
[sueann.s.lipinski@wv.gov](mailto:sueann.s.lipinski@wv.gov)

#### **Grant Partners**

WV Association of Counties  
 2211 Washington Street East  
 Charleston, WV 25311-2118  
[www.wvaco.org](http://www.wvaco.org)

WV Municipal League  
 2020 Kanawha Blvd East, Charleston, WV, 25311  
[www.wvml.org](http://www.wvml.org)

NIC WV Interactive  
 10 Hale Street, Third Floor  
 Charleston, WV 25301  
[www.wv.gov](http://www.wv.gov)

WV Office of Technology  
 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East Capitol Complex - Building 5, 10th Floor  
 Charleston, WV 25305  
[www.technology.wv.gov](http://www.technology.wv.gov)

WV Department of Education  
 Local High Schools  
 (Varies by County)

#### **Grant Partner Managers**

Kathy Yates  
[kathy@wvaco.org](mailto:kathy@wvaco.org)

Kathy Burton  
[kburton@wvml.org](mailto:kburton@wvml.org)

Ian McQuinn  
[ian@wvinteractive.com](mailto:ian@wvinteractive.com)

Tammie Means  
[tammie.s.means@wv.gov](mailto:tammie.s.means@wv.gov)

Teacher  
 (Varies by School)

## ***Business problem Description***

### **Community Outreach**

West Virginia is comprised of 55 counties with more than 230 municipalities. When the Local E-Government Program started, approximately 50% of counties and 75% of incorporated municipalities did not have a viable, informative, sustainable website in which to house e-government applications. Polls reported the counties and municipalities indicated the primary reason for not having a web presence was lack of financial and technical resources.

### **Education**

Government representatives needed to identify economically feasible approaches to online interaction with citizens, while the WVDE needed to design a new public high school curriculum to integrate classroom technology with real life situations. During the project planning phase, it was discovered that many students were disengaged from their county and municipality government functions. Additionally, the WVDE faced the same funding and access to technical resources constraints as municipal and county governments.

### **Government Efficiency and Transparency**

To ascertain the e-government engagement level of West Virginia counties and municipalities, it was imperative to define e-government and what processes and benchmarks would lead to successful and sustainable results. The analysis of counties and municipalities recognized the lack of standards and repeated processes that could be resolved with the Local E-Government Program. Although the Local E-Government Implementation Program does not address every phase of the e-government model, it does provide a framework that can be built upon with subsequent projects.

## ***Business solution description***

### **Community Outreach**

Given the rural nature of West Virginia, and the limited number of condensed population centers, it is necessary to nurture and embrace the autonomy of individual communities while introducing new concepts that support commonality and uniformity on a statewide level. Through focused community building activities, the Local E-Government Program has enabled communities to showcase their individuality through their e-government websites while providing a foundation to bridge a technology gap that will inevitably lead to increased government efficiency and transparency. Hopefully, as the benefits of this program continue to be embraced, it will serve as a catalyst for increased adoption of technologies and as a demand driver for technology services that would otherwise be relegated to areas with high population centers. Increasing community strength and identity has been the key for this project and will continue to play an important role as communities look to build upon the project foundation.

### **Education**

In preparing for the launch of this project, it was surprising to find many students disengaged or ambivalent about their county and municipality government structure and function. The Local E-Government Program has served as a unique learning tool that engages the creativity, insight and skill sets of students while providing a valuable service to their hometowns. Students involved with the project have not only increased their knowledge of how local government operates but have also become personally engaged with elected

officials and government employees as they sought to gather information. This level of interaction has increased social, research and analytical skills, while enabling students to apply their knowledge to a real-world application.

### **Government Efficiency and Transparency**

With the decline in monetary resources for government operation and the increased demand for accountability, it is imperative that governments increase efficiency and transparency in order to be successful. The Local E-Government Program has provided an opportunity for every county and incorporated municipality to accomplish the publishing phase of the PITA E-Government model (described in the Best Practices Section). By achieving this first step, local governments now have a framework in which to pursue interactive and transaction based applications that can further increase government efficiency and transparency. As a result of this project and the continued project promotion pursued by the Community Connect Foundation, local governments are starting to strategically pursue other technologies that will continue to increase the efficient delivery of government information and services.

### ***Benefit to government***

- Facilitated the creation of over 125 sustainable e-government websites, a 44% increase from when this project started in 2007.
- Verified over 120 preexisting e-government websites that have since increased their e-government engagement level to ensure that current and concise information is being published to their websites.
- Linked over 250 sites to a local e-government section of the central WV State Portal ([wv.gov/local](http://wv.gov/local)). By consolidating this information, citizens and visitors can now access information about counties and municipalities in WV from one source.
- Provided laptops, digital camcorders, digital cameras and additional equipment to 55 high schools across the state that combined with comprehensive E-Government training, allowed for the creation of 125 e-government websites while fulfilling a civics education requirement for participating high school students.
- Provided an economical acquisition of the Microsoft Office Suite for every participating county and municipality. This has allowed participating political subdivisions to obtain/upgrade computers and increase office efficiency.
- Implemented a framework for counties and municipalities to continue the adoption of e-government services including, but not limited to, social media integration, interactive applications and transaction based services.
- Encouraged the state to recognize e-government services as an integral part of the state's comprehensive strategy to promote the deployment and adoption of high speed broadband services. The success of this program has led to e-government being embraced and promoted at all levels of government within West Virginia.

## ***Benefits to customers***

- Citizens now have online access to government information and services for every county in WV and 85 percent of incorporated municipalities.
- Students involved with this program have learned valuable lessons about the structure and function of local government entities as well as learning valuable project management and technical skills.
- Elected government officials are more aware of the online services requested by their constituents and are better prepared to offer those services through the framework established through this program.
- Increased adoption of e-government services will continue to generate demand for broadband services, thus providing the incentive for telecommunication providers to continue broadband expansion.
- Cost savings will continue to be seen by counties and municipalities that utilize their online presence to disseminate information and provide services, thus maximizing the potential of their current staff.
- Increased awareness will result in an engaged and active citizenry.

## ***Best practices employed (e.g., governance, relationship management, communication and marketing, etc.). That is, what business practices contributed to the success of this project, helped maintain commitment, funding and adoption.***

When this program was expanded from a pilot project to a statewide initiative, it was imperative that the structure and management was properly streamlined to generate results but also flexible enough to deal with the individual concerns of counties and municipalities. The commitment and resolve of the project partners was evident when working together to develop the necessary framework, methodology and benchmarks paved the way for success. The pilot project allowed for problem detection and reallocation of resources to remove any obstacles that would hinder success. A targeted public awareness campaign helped set the narrative for the statewide implementation and remove the apprehension of counties and municipalities. A strict adherence to timelines and budgets created momentum that demonstrated measurable success. Online communication tools were deployed to manage and simplify communications among the growing number of project participants. Problems were promptly communicated and resolved during regular meetings of program stakeholders. Despite the obstacles and challenges that occur when executing a project of this magnitude, leaders emerged, goals were achieved and the vision was strengthened. Success was a result of the program partners working together and the unwavering belief in the value of the program.

### **Standard approach / methodology**

E-government is the use of information technologies to enhance the access to and delivery of Government information and services to the public and to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and/or the quality of Government operations. A simple E-Government system can be described in four steps: Publish,

Interact, Transact and Adoption (PITA):

### **Publish**

The first step in implementing a successful e-government initiative is to create a framework in which to provide services. This most commonly consists of a publicly accessible and government sanctioned website. The publishing of government information allows citizens and businesses to easily locate information about government services and how to utilize them. When executed properly the information is current, concise, and easily understood. Examples of this include general information websites for counties and cities, government department websites, approved and verified community/government blogs, etc.

### **Interact**

After a verified forum to publish government information has been established it is important to interact and engage with the users of the website. This form of interaction increases awareness of government services, allows for government transparency, and creates cost-effective and efficient means to streamline government activities. Examples of this include online forms that can be completed and submitted securely via the internet, live support functionality allowing for the users to directly chat or instant message a knowledgeable person to answer questions and video streaming of city council or county commission meetings.

### **Transact**

Once an established, trusted interaction is in place, web-based transaction applications can be pursued. Government services that require the transfer of money can be timely and costly to manage. Streamlining these transactions through a website allows for 24 hour delivery of government services while increasing cost-savings to citizens, businesses, and government entities. Examples of this include secure transactions to pay tickets, fines, permit and application fees, as well as visit online stores to purchase gifts and souvenirs.

### **Adoption**

Once e-government technologies are in place it is important to take proactive steps to increase user adoption. It is of no benefit for a government entity to take all the steps to increase government efficiency and transparency through e-government initiatives if they are not being utilized. Furthermore, in order to truly see cost-savings on interactive and transaction based applications it is necessary to reach certain adoption rates.

The PITA principle is a condensed concept of basic e-government principles that correlated well with the Local E-Government Program and in no way serves as a complete overview of e-government in principle or in practice. Following completion of this statewide initiative, the project partners were rewarded with a self-sustaining E-Government model, motivated and engaged counties and municipalities, statewide and national recognition and an enthusiastic group of partners who are committed to making West Virginia a leader in the development and adoption of e-government services.

## ***Describe why and how this collaborative effort is transferrable to other jurisdictions.***

Other states are facing similar economic constraints that hamper their ability to establish a web presence. Within West Virginia, the sites are available free of charge to any county or incorporated municipality. The sites are linked directly to the local government section of the State's Web portal (<http://www.wv.gov/local/Pages/default.aspx>). This project succeeded due to the use of repeatable processes and templates. These can be used for any similar project anywhere. The processes and templates that were successful from one municipality to another do not lose their viability just because they cross a state border. The templates, questionnaires, and sites structures are easily portable to any other government entity (federal, state, or local) using the same or compatible content management system. Additionally, by using the infrastructure provided NIC WVI, the program stakeholders are poised to assist in replicating this project in other states.

This solution addresses many of the 2011 State CIO Survey Strategies for optimization of IT Services. This project demonstrated the successful collaboration of more than six organizations to deliver a product that achieved the goals of the participants. It provided an opportunity for groups to develop teaming relationships that have continued, planting seed for collaboration on other endeavors. Although not all websites are utilizing the ultimate results (transparency, on-line transactions and engagement), the foundation is built and many counties and incorporated municipalities are paving the way by improving information sharing and streamlining transaction processing.

***References:***

University of Minnesota's E-Government guide, Access E-Government,  
<http://www.egov.umn.edu/>

"4 Elements of Successful Business Web Presence".  
<https://openforum.com/>