



## WVDE Electronic Application Processing

Collaboration Between State Government, West Virginia School Systems and Educational Institutions

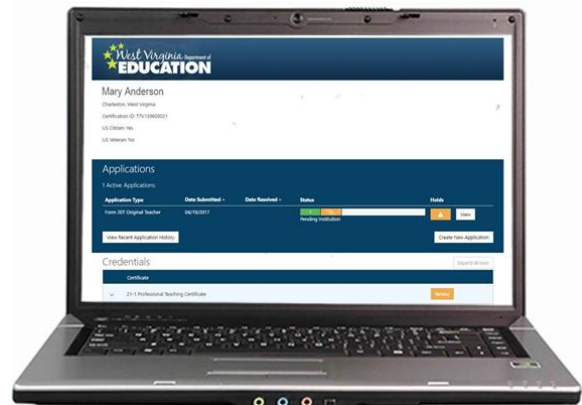
### NASCIO Category: Cross-Boundary Collaboration & Partnerships

Project Initiated: January 2016

Project Completed: February 2017

#### Collaboration and Partnerships:

- West Virginia Office of Technology
- West Virginia Department of Education:  
*Office of Educator Effectiveness and Licensure*
- 55 County Superintendents, Private Schools and Regional Education Service Authority (RESA)
- Educational Institutions across the Country



#### Contact:

John Dunlap, Chief Technology Officer  
West Virginia Office of Technology  
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East  
Building 5, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Charleston, WV 25305  
(304) 558-8101  
[john.d.dunlap@wv.gov](mailto:john.d.dunlap@wv.gov)

*West Virginia*  
**OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY**

## Executive Summary

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The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) Office of Educator Effectiveness and Licensure issues over 17,000 initial and renewal credentials each year with many requiring approvals from multiple entities such as county superintendents, colleges and universities. Teachers, administrators and support staff wishing to apply for an initial or renew a teaching credential were required to endure a slow, manual paper process that often left the applicant in the dark regarding the status of their application.

Previously, applicants were required to use outdated, redundant and inefficient forms which often lead to incomplete or inaccurate information being processed. Many of the forms require approval from out-of-state colleges and universities which also could be a difficult task and caused additional delays. In addition, applicants often did not follow a standardized process when obtaining approval for certification. This often led to confusion regarding for which certification applicants were eligible, if approval from the employing county, institution, or both were required, and how and when to pay for any fees associated with obtaining certification.

To fix these issues and streamline the entire process, the Department of Education enlisted the help of the state's eGovernment partner, West Virginia Interactive (WVI), a member of the NIC family of companies, to develop the West Virginia Electronic Application Processing System (WVEAP). The WVEAP is a completely intuitive application that not only manages an application from submission to final approval, but also helps determine what type of applications are needed based on a teacher's credentials. In addition, applicants can easily identify and renew expiring credentials, send instant approval requests to applicable county and institutional approvers, and upload required supporting documentation.

By creating a new and highly efficient web-based application, applicants, school systems, educational institutions, and the Office of Educator Effectiveness can collaborate with one another in a way that was never before possible. Thus, a process that could literally take weeks to complete is now reduced to a matter of days.

## Concept

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The concept of multiple education entities collaborating with one another was an exciting but challenging task. It was obvious that the West Virginia Department of Education needed a way for new graduates or anyone needing to renew a West Virginia teaching certification to easily complete the necessary applications and make payments online. It was also important to standardize the approval process and keep the applicant informed the entire time.

Standardizing the approval process would prove to be the most challenging part of the project. Creating a backend application that would integrate seamlessly with WVDE's current framework along with generating buy-in from the 55 West Virginia county superintendents, private schools, and colleges and universities throughout the country would require unprecedented collaboration to complete.

After extensive requirements gathering, it was determined that adding the approximately fifty forms in phases would be the best approach to transitioning the paper forms into an online Process. Giving WVDE and the school systems time needed to train their coordinators and provide crucial feedback would be critical to the success of the project. With that said, the first renewal option was released in April of 2016 with West Virginia coaches renewing their coaching license online.

By August of 2016, applicants were able to renew their teaching, administrative and support staff certificates online. This was significant since the renewal process took full advantage of all the capabilities offered by the WVEAP Application. Applicants are able to submit their renewal application online and watch it traverse through the approval process, all while receiving real-time updates. Colleges receive a request to review the application and they can either approve, deny or send it back to the applicant requesting additional information be added to the application.

After approval by the college/university, the system automatically pushes the application to the county who hired the applicant. Once the application is reviewed and approved by the county, the applicant is prompted to pay any fees associated with submitting the renewal application to the WVDE for approval. After the applicant makes the payment, which may be done from the same dashboard used to submit the application, it is then pushed to the Office of Education Effectiveness and Licensure for approval.

Once payment is made, the application is officially registered in the WVDE's internal database and may be processed by their certification coordinators. Any holds, approvals or rejections placed within the WVDE's internal application are automatically reflected on the applicant's dashboard. This feature not only lets the applicant know the

status of their application, but also the hiring county knows the certification status for all their employees and can be confident that they are compliant in regards to licensing.

Additional applications or “forms” added include the initial teaching certificate for both in-state and out-of-state applicants and renewal options for athletic trainers and limited football trainers. New forms are continuously being added as the Application grows to full capacity.

Users are able to use their existing WVDE single sign-on username and password to log in to the WVEAP Application which was a crucial part of getting the applicants access quickly and efficiently. When accessing the WVDE website, users looking for the old paper forms that were previously used are now directed to their new applicant dashboard that tells them exactly which credentials need renewed and the status of any pending application.

One of the key advantages to the way the project was developed is the ability for it to evolve as new policies emerge and guidelines change from year to year. This allows the Department of Education to quickly initiate changes with minimal impact to the applicant and approvers.

Paying for the new Application was never a concern for the Department of Education. The WVEAP Application was developed using a tool provided to the Department of Education, West Virginia counties or educational institutions. Applicants are charged a minimal fee in addition to the fees collected by the WVDE to process an application.

## Significance

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### Scope

- Provide West Virginia teachers, administrators and support staff a way to obtain or renew their teaching credentials online.
- Ability to make online payments
- Automate the approval process.
- Beneficiaries are: Teachers, administrators, support staff, colleges and universities, all fifty-five county superintendents and private schools.
- The stakeholder is: The West Virginia Department Education and the Office of Educator Effectiveness and Licensure.

The significance of the WVEAP Application and the collaboration between the Department of Education, county superintendents and educational institutions is very

meaningful. When looking at other states and their ability to process an application forms, the WVEAP Application is unique due to level of functionality it provides. Many states allow users to view certification information online, but very few are able to process an application from cradle to grave.

Implementation was very successful due to the fact everyone involved in the project played a hand in determining what functionality was needed and how to best apply it. From the WVDE legal and cert coordinators, county superintendents and colleges across the country, every aspect of their job was taken into consideration. The goal was not to create an online process that mimicked the current one, but to improve the experience for everyone involved.

Expanding the ability to service the citizens of West Virginia using advanced technology was an initiative put in place by then West Virginia Governor Earl Ray Tomblin. The WVEAP application goes a long way in realizing the initiative put in place by the former Governor and is still being realized today.

## Impact

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The impact of this initiative cannot be overstated. West Virginia has struggled keeping educators in the state and providing them with a centralized, web-based solution to help with licensing and certification is extremely beneficial.

During the first year alone, over 4,500 applications have been submitted using the WVEAP Application. Of those 4500, approximately 3416 have been processed by the Office of Educator Effectiveness and Licensure. In addition, 326 colleges/universities and 72 West Virginia school systems have reviewed and approved applications.

West Virginia teachers have seen an immediate impact using the new WVEAP Application. The slow manual process used in the past is replaced by an intuitive Application that guides them through the entire application. No forms to download, nothing to mail out or costly trips to get county and institutional signatures, and no more being left in the dark wondering where my application is in the approval process.

As a result of the collaboration when processing an application, West Virginia School systems are seeing an immediate impact getting their teachers, administrators and support staff licensed in a timely manner. Making sure all employees have the proper certifications prior to the school year starting is crucial.

By partnering with West Virginia Interactive and taking advantage of their self-funded model, The Department of Education, Office of Effectiveness and Licensure saved approximately \$60,000 in development and maintenance costs. WVDE also benefits by having to take less customer support calls and tracking down applicants who previously mailed in the wrong or incomplete paper forms.

The collaboration and sharing of information between everyone involved shows that creating an innovative and cost-effective initiative is not only possible, but necessary in order to stay competitive in today's technology driven society. As West Virginia looks for ways to utilize technology to expand online services, The West Virginia Department of Education is at the forefront still looking for ways to grow.