

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Office of the Chief Technology Officer

June 1, 2021

NASCIO State IT Recognition Awards

Category: Enterprise IT Management Initiatives

Empowering DC Government Remote Work Through a One-Stop Portal of Resources, Guides and Collaboration Tools

Project date: March 16, 2020 – current

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Executive Summary

For more than a year, the team at the DC Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) has worked tirelessly to support our fellow agencies as they adjusted and adapted to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The team stepped up immediately in order to meet an overwhelming demand for solutions to work remotely, serve our constituents online and track and report progress. The team at the DC Office of the Chief Technology Officer continues to deliver - working around the clock to manage secure, fast and easy to use solutions.

Just prior to Mayor Bowser's stay-at-home order which took effect March 16, 2020, the DC Office of the Chief Technology Officer Leadership team met on Saturday March 14, 2020 to determine how we would better work together to meet the needs of our customer agencies. One of the many products our teams collaborated on was remote.dc.gov, a one-stop online portal that has allowed 63% of the more than 44,000 DC Government workforce to work remotely and securely, where prior to COVID-19 less than 10% were remote at any given time.

Idea

Beginning with a concept from our Chief Information Security Officer looking for a way for the DC Government workforce to securely access the network, and with input and collaboration from the communications, applications and development teams the supplement of online resources and tools was added and then remote.dc.gov was born.

This dedicated site includes access points to the VPN or an applications portal where VPN is not required, links to email, virtual meeting resources, training videos and public engagement collaboration tools.

Implementation

Implemented in under 72 hours, remote.dc.gov began as a collaboration of the security, communications, applications and development teams that worked day and night to create the secure connections to the HR, financial and tech portals already in place as well as design and create new collaboration tool resources including training videos and how to guides that anyone, from tech savvy to tech oblivious could navigate.

The resources needed to implement were team expertise and time. It was a major project priority that was deployed rapidly in order to prepare for the new operational status of DC government in response to the pandemic.

Technology Implementation:

The traditional implementation of remote access for applications required a DC Government issued computer that met a certain criterion to ensure the end device is secure before connection to VPN. At the start of the pandemic, DC did not have time to issue devices to all users that needed to be remote.

With the remote.dc.gov portal we were able to publish critical enterprise-wide applications to authorized users. The base technology uses PulseSecure Connect VPN solution that allows access to applications through a web browser. Once a user is connected to the remote work portal using their authentication, they were presented with a set of applications they are now able to access using their web browser. Sensitive applications still require a second level of authentication ensuring access is secure.

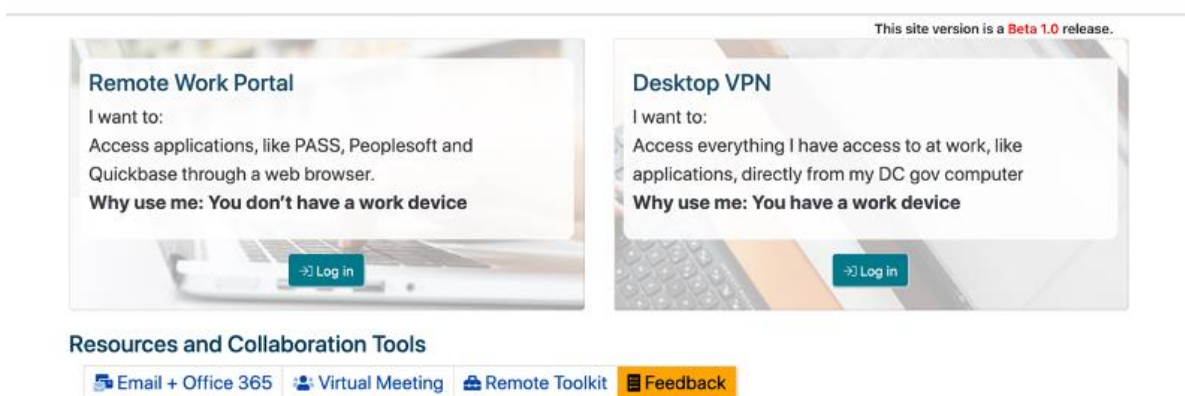
With this solution application access is secure through a TLS connection and all data is preserved in a browser session, making it secure enough to be accessible from a non-government issued device. With this solution you can see all you can see all your data, edit your data, but you cannot save it to your computer.

The solution also provides a custom set of applications to different use cases based on DC government agency requirements. All of the accessed data is logged and is auditable so that any given time the system owner or security team can review how it was accessed and when.

Beta Version:

Developers set up a secure site in under 72 hours, knowing we would eventually transition it to the Drupal platform used for our dc.gov websites. The site structure was easy to use and included a remote toolkit pdf that could be downloaded for users more comfortable with printed guides.

REMOTE.DC.GOV



This site version is a **Beta 1.0** release.

Remote Work Portal

I want to:
Access applications, like PASS, Peoplesoft and Quickbase through a web browser.
Why use me: You don't have a work device

[→ Log in](#)

Desktop VPN

I want to:
Access everything I have access to at work, like applications, directly from my DC gov computer
Why use me: You have a work device

[→ Log in](#)

Resources and Collaboration Tools

- [Email + Office 365](#)
- [Virtual Meeting](#)
- [Remote Toolkit](#)
- [Feedback](#)

Roll Out:

Worked with Agency CIOs: We established OCTO's COVID-19 Response team and set regular calls to check in with all agency CIOs, this helped not only get the word out about the portal but also helped with testing and iterating to ensure the resources their agency needs was on the site.

Added to start.dc.gov: Prior to COVID-19 many DC government employees started their day on start.dc.gov, so we added a button at the top of the page to direct them to the secure remote work portal:

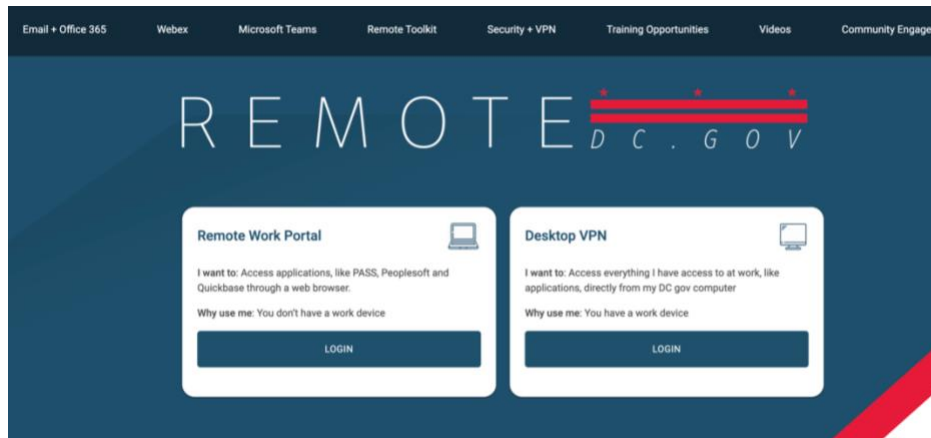
Need Help Working Remotely? Visit:
remote.dc.gov

Communicated with All DC Government Personnel: Using video announcements from the Assistant City Administrator, government-wide emails, and newsletter announcements to managers and operation officers in order to ensure buy-in and trickle down the use to program staff.

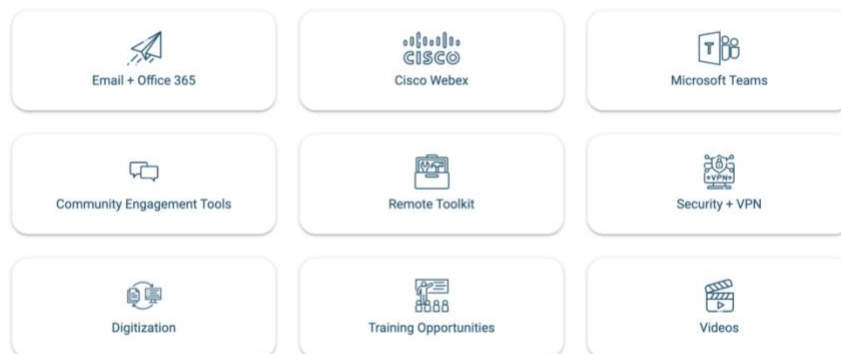
Version 2.0:

Beginning in June 2020 the DC Office of the Chief Technology Officer communications team worked with the web services team to bring remote.dc.gov onto the dc.gov Drupal platform so that it could be managed and maintained by the web team.

Drupal has more capabilities that enhanced the look and feel of the portal helping the usability and user experience.



Resources and Collaboration Tools



If you need help please contact your Agency CIO/IT Lead

Impact

Remote.dc.gov is a true representation of the mission of the DC Office of the Chief Technology Officer which is to empower DC government through technology by providing valued services, advising agencies, and collaboratively governing IT.

Prior to COVID-19 less than 10% of the DC Government workforce were remote at any given time. With over 130,000 unique visits, remote.dc.gov has become the go-to resource for DC government workers to discover new ways of working virtually, continue delivering valued

services and enter the DC network securely from outside the office and well into the future of work, no matter their operational status.

	Users ? ↓	New Users ?	Sessions ?
	136,412 % of Total: 100.00% (136,412)	136,479 % of Total: 100.01% (136,471)	266,183 % of Total: 100.00% (266,183)
1. New Visitor	136,412 (89.18%)	136,479 (100.00%)	136,479 (51.27%)

Google analytics of remote.dc.gov.

Long-term

We continue to look for ways to improve our internal processes to better help DC Government weather this response and prepare for recovery and the new hybrid work structure of the future.

The portal will be further developed into a next generation zero trust-based application portal that will provide more streamline access to trusted machines from anywhere to any device as well as provide limited access to third-party devices.

Future Iterations and Long-term goals: As we head into the office we have to help prepare agencies for a successful transition including best practices on how to:

- Use the cloud to transfer documents locally so they can be accessed whether remote or in the office;
- Patch devices that have not been on the network in over a year; and
- Enable conference rooms for hybrid in-person and remote attended meetings.

Remote.dc.gov has been an important part of empowering DC government employees to deliver services digitally and the expectation is to continue improving how we reach residents, businesses and visitors as we build back better.

DC Mayor Muriel Bowser invested in digital services to change how we think about delivering services to our residents through better design and technology and remote.dc.gov will be an integral tool to communicating these new processes and solutions.