



The Computerworld Honors Program

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Final Copy of Case Study

Status:

Laureate

Year:

2013

Organization Name:

City of Boston

Organization URL:

www.cityofboston.gov

Project Name:

Boston Citizens Connect

Please select the category in which you are submitting your entry:

Innovation

Please provide an overview of the nominated project. Describe the problem it was intended to solve, the technology or approach used, how it was innovative and any technical or other challenges that had to be overcome for successful implementation and adoption. (In 300 words or less.)

The City of Boston sought to create an innovative way to better connect with constituents, improve services, take advantage of the technology trends of today, and respond to Mayor Thomas Menino's initiative to build stronger relationships with -- and support the needs of -- neighborhoods, kids and families. Boston CIO Bill Oates was the leader behind the City's award-winning Citizens Connect initiative, which empowers citizens to serve as the "eyes and ears" of their local government to report issues such as potholes, damages to signs and graffiti and monitor the results. Through Citizens Connect, Boston residents today can interact with city officials via mobile device, no matter where they are or what technology they're using: self-service portal, Twitter, Web site, online chat and

text. The most significant so far is a smartphone app that allows residents to take a photo of an issue, such as graffiti, and submit it directly to the city using their phone's GPS data to pinpoint the problem. More recently the City has partnered with Bump, an app that detects potholes via call phone and reports them to the City without the driver needing to touch the device or take their eyes off the road. This work has been so well received that the City is now partnering with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to provide this technology to other local governments. These technology advancements are revolutionizing the way Boston does business and engages with its citizens. Twenty percent of citizen requests come via mobile channel, resulting in a 22% increase in citizen satisfaction with city services in the past two years.

When was this project implemented or last updated? (Please specify month and year.) Has it incorporated new technologies and/or other innovations since its initial deployment? (In 300 words or less.)

Boston Citizen Connect first launched in 2009 and, in 2012, launched its third iteration. Also in 2012, Boston has made further progress including expanding Boston's highly successful Citizens Connect application to cities and towns across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under the state's Community Innovation Challenge. It also has released a new "Open Government" capability to support increased transparency and engagement that addresses Boston's commitment to residents, visitors and partners. (See more on this in Question 10.)

If this is a previously submitted project that has been significantly updated and/or expanded, please describe the nature of the update here. (In 300 words or less.)

N/A

Is implementation of the project complete? If no, please describe the project's phases and which phase the project is now in. (In 300 words or less.)

To further expand on its success, on December 4, 2012, Boston announced the launch of its next phase, Boston About Results, an innovative program to give the public tools to judge how the city is faring. The new performance management system includes a Web site and app called Citizen Insight that provides statistics from across city departments (such as police, public works and the school system). The virtual score cards expose city data on more than 200 measurements, or about 10% of the total measurements Boston tracks for internal purposes. Intended to increase transparency and enhance citizen engagement, Citizen Insight gives citizens a snapshot of monthly crime statistics

and public school achievements, and how those numbers compare with the city's own benchmarks and whether numbers have changed from one year to the next.

Please provide at least one example of how the technology project has benefited a specific individual or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work. (In 300 words or less.)

One way that Citizens Connect has directly impacted citizens and the internal operations of the City is through its connection with the city's CRM system, managing work orders that respond to constituent requests. The City's Constituent Relationship & Work Order Management system administers requests for service from citizens; creates work orders for City agencies; and tracks progress through completion. This system has increased service quality, accuracy, timeliness and accountability. New online forms are designed to collect all the necessary information related to a citizen request, which reduces the need for follow-up questions. Once received, the requests are immediately assigned to the responsible department so they can address the issue faster. Prior to this, service delivery departments had no idea how many calls were received. With the new system, they know exactly how many requests they received and how long it took to address them. The new forms have resulted in fewer phone calls and more Web-based requests. In the past six months, the percentage of total requests that were submitted via the Web site has grown from 9% to 20%. Its GIS Data Hub provides a resource for both City employees and residents to access maps, reports and charts using geographic data layers. Constituents can use the Data Hub to see what service issues neighbors have reported in their community. The result is fast, real-time data delivered directly into the hands of all who need it. To facilitate two-way communication, the Citizens Connect program also allows residents to receive emails, text messages, tweets and phone calls from city staff when their requests are opened and closed. And, city officials can leverage the service and response data to predict future issues, save money and manage city operations more effectively.

Would this project be considered an innovation, a best practice or other notable advancement that could be adopted by or tailored for other organizations and uses? If yes, please describe that here. (In 300 words or less.)

Yes. In 2012, under the Commonwealth's Innovation Challenge, Boston has made further progress including expanding Boston's highly successful Citizens Connect application to 140 cities and towns in Massachusetts. It also has released a new "Open Government" capability to support increased transparency and engagement that addresses Boston's commitment to residents, visitors and partners. As a result of its efforts, in November 2012 the City of Boston was



named among the 10 most advanced digital cities in America according to the Center for Digital Government's Annual Digital Cities Survey, because of its creative cost savings methods that consolidate and enable shared services and increased citizen engagement tools. In 2011, Boston's Citizens Connect Mobile application was selected by a group of judges from across the public sector technology community to receive the 2011 Government Computer News Awards for IT Achievement. CIO Bill Oates' vision and ability to bring together internal and external resources to solve City problems is key to Boston's success. His leadership has enabled the City to continuously be an example of thoughtful investment in technologies to achieve maximum benefit for the City of Boston. His approachable style makes him easy to work with as a partner and as a leader who encourages collaboration.