

2015 Achievement Awards Virginia Association of Counties

APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2015.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Locality: _____

Program Title: _____

Program Category: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Complete Mailing Address: _____

Telephone # _____ Fax # _____

E-mail: _____

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Chesterfield County, Virginia

VACo Achievement Award Application

Program Title:

Open Government Webpage

Program Category:

Customer Service

Overview:

In support of the Chesterfield County (County) Board of Supervisor's commitment to transparency and openness in government and at the request of numerous citizens the County created an Open Government webpage, which serves as a central portal for citizens to find useful information such as vendor payments (checkbook online), financial statements, budgets, purchasing contracts and various other items of public interest. This required the collaborative efforts of County Leadership, staff from Information Systems Technology (IST), Accounting, Budget and Schools, as well as input received from citizens. The County evaluated multiple options to provide this information and elected to design the site with existing resources, which did not require additional funding from taxpayers, and could best meet the needs expressed by our citizens. The Open Government webpage was made available to citizens beginning November 2014.

Challenge:

Numerous citizens and the Board of Supervisors requested that the County be more transparent and accountable by providing additional information on the County's website that was not already being published. More specifically, the County was requested to provide a checkbook online so citizens could monitor County spending. The citizens outlined their specific transparency requests which included a searchable checkbook online, transparency website, ability to download data to Excel, and copies of procurement contracts. Benchmarking already

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completed by staff had revealed that states and local governments were emerging with transparency websites which include payment information. A few states have mandated that their local government's post payment information online. While the state of Virginia has not yet required localities to post this information online, as a leader in local government, the County supported the transparency initiative. Thus, the Open Government webpage was designed and implemented to meet our citizens' requests and support the Board of Supervisor's initiative. The development of the Vendor Payments Report required staff to be creative and innovative in process change and report development to extract reportable information from the ERP financial system, protect confidential and private information, and present the results to the public in an easy searchable Excel file. The County met the stated needs of our citizens by providing an innovative and creative solution to transparency and accountability using existing resources. Citizens are now able to view information that was unavailable in the past that helps them to understand the cost of County programs.

Implementation:

Numerous citizens and the Board of Supervisors requested that the County be more transparent by providing additional information on the County's website that was not already being published. More specifically, the County was requested to provide an online checkbook so citizens could monitor County spending. Various members of County staff met with a small group of citizens to understand what type of information they were interested in seeing. The citizens outlined their specific requests which included a searchable checkbook online, transparency website, ability to download data to Excel, and copies of procurement contracts. The needs expressed by our citizens matched the benchmarking we had done with other localities. Benchmarking revealed a wide range of implementation cost ranging from minimal

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amounts to \$500,000. There are numerous products available that support transparency for local governments; some require monthly service fees while others require onetime implementation cost plus ongoing maintenance cost. The County evaluated expanding its current financial Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system for \$100,000 or implementing a hosted solution with a 3rd party which could cost up to \$3,000 per month. Using a hosted solution would still have required County resources to identify and extract the information to be published using the 3rd party system. The County decided to deploy an in-house solution because we felt it provided us with the flexibility to meet the objectives, would be no cost other than existing staff's time, and would best meet the needs of our citizens. Total staff time to create the webpage and Vendor Payments Report and to ensure confidential and private data was protected was approximately 500 hours. The County used existing hardware and software which required no additional funding.

In developing the Open Government webpage, IST staff followed Best Practices and guidance outlined from the Sunshine Review Organization (now part of Ballotpedia). The most difficult aspect of the project was providing the information related to an online checkbook. The Accounting department took the lead for checkbook online and researched options available with the goal of providing meaningful data without disclosing confidential or private information. It was determined that the best source of data would be the Accounts Payable vendor payment system. A typical checkbook online would include check date, check number and vendor. The County decided to offer more than the typical checkbook information and has also included department and expense description. Because of the inclusion of the additional information the County refers to its checkbook online as the Vendor Payments Report. Not all payment information could be made public because certain state and federal laws require that some

information be protected. This includes medical-related information under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) and exclusions identified through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The County also wanted to protect confidential and private information of citizens and business partners, information related to pending legal matters and information that could jeopardize public-safety enforcement. In order to protect this information staff had to identify which information needed to be protected and then exclude it from reporting. The County did not have the capability of flagging confidential or private data in the financial systems without having customizations performed by the software vendor. Staff created a report using a Windows-based report writer provided by our ERP vendor to extract financial data from the Accounts Payable tables within the ERP financial system. Staff created logic within the report to exclude confidential and private information. Staff also identified certain types of payments such as those made to police personnel, candidates going through the recruitment process, as well as for certain types of legal payments that needed to be excluded which required some creative report designing to accomplish. When the report is run it is then exported to Excel where additional security is placed on the file to prevent changes as well as placing filters on the worksheet to help make the data searchable. The Excel report is then published on the Open Government webpage. The County chose Excel for the Vendor Payments Report (checkbook online) because it offers many options to the citizens such as filtering and sorting that allow easy access to expenditures by department, for specific account codes, total payments made to a vendor, etc. Those with more sophisticated Excel skills can also use pivot tables to view data. Monthly files are published along with a cumulative file for Fiscal Year. Before the County began publishing the Vendor Payments Report a thorough review of eight months data was performed by all County departments and Schools to ensure private and confidential data was not

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being disclosed. This review resulted in some internal process changes and some changes to the existing chart of accounts. The County developed and implemented monthly processes that are efficient and repeatable that helps ensure confidential and private information is not being disclosed.

The Vendor Payments Report is one of many items available to the citizens through links on the Open Government webpage. Other items include; current and prior year budgets, Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, purchasing contract information, building permits and zoning information, public meetings and videos, background on County Officials, and options for citizens to submit cost savings ideas and to report fraud, waste and abuse. Since Chesterfield County Public Schools (CCPS) accounts for 41% of the County's budget, staff collaborated with CCPS to produce a payments report for CCPS expenditures that is published on the School's new Open Government webpage. The County's Open Government webpage has a link to the CCPS Open Government webpage that contains their Vendor Payments Report.

Before the County published the Open Government webpage a meeting was held with the group of citizens who had expressed interest in an Open Government webpage with focus on an online checkbook. The purpose of the meeting was to demo the County's solution and to evaluate if it met the needs of the citizens. The citizens had originally requested numerous items and proposed a three phase implementation that included a searchable checkbook online, transparency website, ability to download data to Excel, and copies of procurement contracts. The County was able to meet the majority of the needs identified with the initial rollout of the webpage. The citizen group was very pleased with the proposed solution and acknowledged that it met their needs. They were also very pleased to hear that it was implemented at no cost to the taxpayers other than staff time and were impressed how quickly the County was able to fulfill the request. A

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local newspaper, Chesterfield Observer, reported a citizen saying the information now available is “pretty much everything we wanted. We wanted to be able to see what the county is spending and where they’re spending it, and now we can.”

Chesterfield County elected a soft rollout of the Open Government webpage in November 2014 and then a full rollout to the citizens during January 2015. The webpage was available to anyone beginning in November but was only publicized to staff and the citizen group who had expressed interest. This gave the County the opportunity to work through any issues before formally presenting the webpage to the county citizens during a January 2015 Board of Supervisors meeting. During November and December the webpage averaged 48 unique visits and 65 total visits which indicated we had several interested citizens who visited the site multiple times. Once the webpage was demoed to the public at the January 2015 Board of Supervisors’ meeting the unique visits to the site more than doubled to 112 during January and 214 during February. During February the County had 45 citizens who visited the page multiple times. The webpage also offers citizens the opportunity to contact the County through email to answer questions related to the site or request additional information if they are unable to locate what they are looking for. Based on the fact that the County has only received one question related to the webpage since its rollout we believe that citizens are able to access the information in an effective manner that meets their needs.

Summary:

In support of the Chesterfield County (County) Board of Supervisor’s commitment to transparency and openness in government and at the request of numerous citizens the County created an Open Government webpage, which serves as a central portal for citizens to find useful information such as vendor payments (checkbook online), financial statements, budgets,

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purchasing contracts and various other items of public interest. This required the collaborative efforts of County Leadership, staff from Information Systems Technology (IST), Accounting, Budget and Schools, as well as input received from citizens.

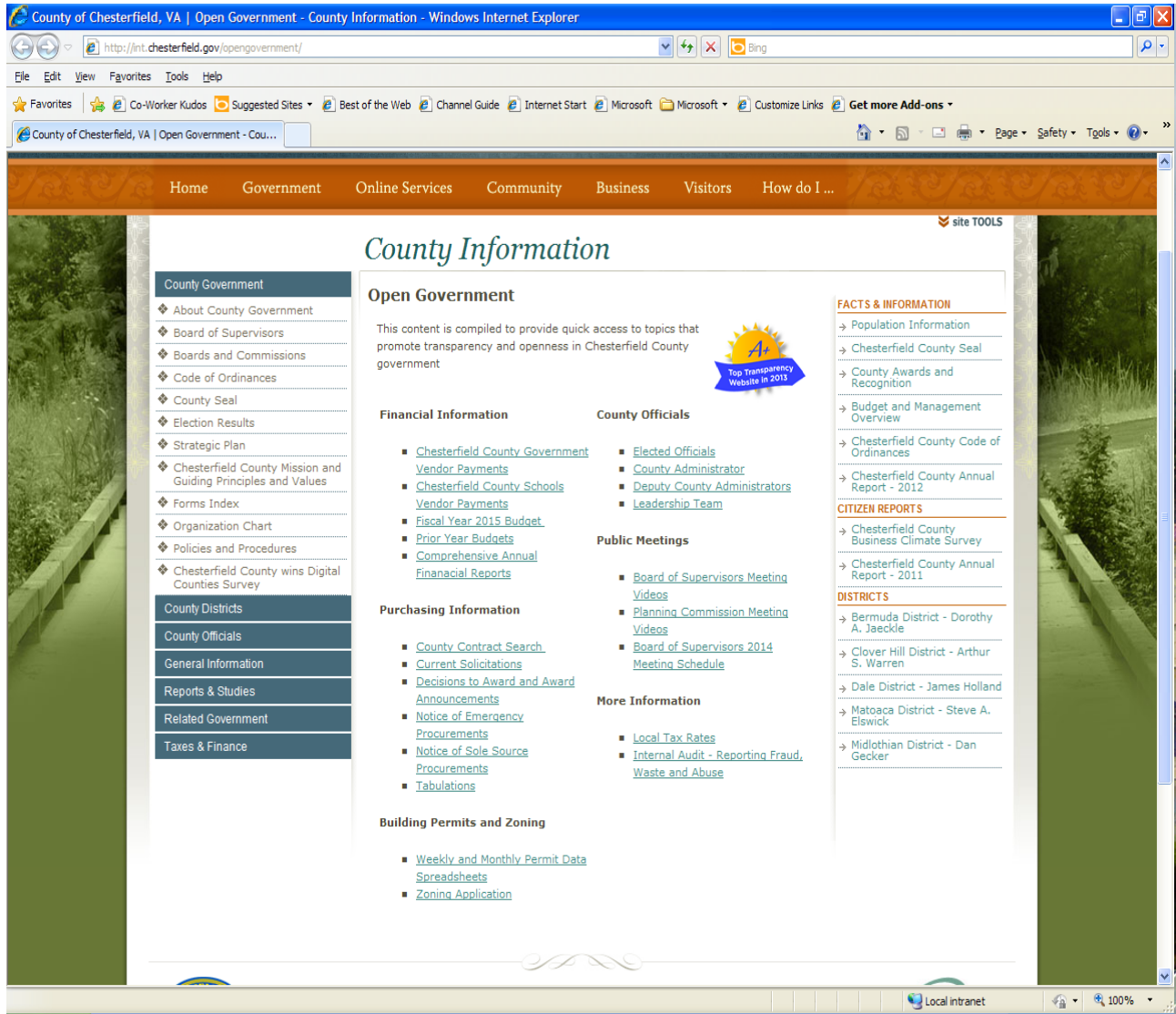
The County decided the best option for the Open Government webpage was an in-house solution which required an investment of staff time only with no external costs. The development of the Vendor Payments Report required staff to be creative and innovative in process change and report development to extract reportable information from the ERP financial system, protect confidential and private information, and present the results to the public in an easy searchable Excel file. The initial feedback from citizens is that they are very pleased with the solution the County implemented at no cost to taxpayers, other than staff time, and acknowledged that it met their needs. They were also impressed with how quickly the County was able to fulfill their request.

The development and implementation of Chesterfield County's Open Government webpage and Vendor Payments Reports provide citizens with the information they requested and supports the County's commitment to transparency and accountability. The searchable Excel report allows citizens the ability to view information that was unavailable in the past that helps them to understand the cost of County programs. The webpage received 214 visits from citizens the first month it was made available and publicized.

The County met the stated needs of our citizens by providing an innovative and creative solution to transparency and accountability using existing resources. We believe this solution can be a model for other localities.

Supplemental:

Screen shot of Chesterfield County's Open Government webpage



Chesterfield County, Virginia

Screen shot of Chesterfield County's Vendor Payments Report

January 2015 Vendor Payments - Microsoft Excel

File Home Insert Page Layout Formulas Data Review View

A5 Check Date

Please enable editing, if prompted. Then use the arrow buttons at the top of the columns to sort, search and filter. To retrieve all data, make sure the "Select All" box is checked for each column.

1
2
3 **ACCOUNTS PAYABLE VENDOR PAYMENTS**
4 **Check Dates 1/1/2015 through 1/31/2015**

Check Date	Check	Vendor	Fund	Department	Account	Extended Amount
2651	1/30/2015	00298678 COLUMBIA GAS OF VIRGINIA	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	FIRE DEPARTMENT	HEATING GAS	893.33
2652	1/30/2015	00298680 CVFAA	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	FIRE DEPARTMENT	DUES ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP	300.00
2653	1/30/2015	00298683 HILLER SYSTEMS INC	WATER FUND	WATER	OTHER PROFESSIONAL SVCS	371.52
2654	1/30/2015	00298683 HILLER SYSTEMS INC	WASTEWATER FUND	WASTE WATER	OTHER PROFESSIONAL SVCS	247.68
2655	1/30/2015	00298684 INMARSAT SOLUTIONS (US) INC	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	POLICE DEPARTMENT	OFFICE EQ ANNUAL MAINT CONT	42.38
2656	1/30/2015	00298685 IRON BRIDGE ANIMAL HOSPITAL	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	POLICE DEPARTMENT	VETERINARIAN SERVICES	2,141.11
2657	1/30/2015	00298686 KMART	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	MENTAL HEALTH SUP SVCS	OTHER OPERATING SUPPLIES	112.45
2658	1/30/2015	00298688 LEWIS GINTER BOTANICAL GARDEN	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	PARKS AND RECREATION	EDUCATION AND CONFERENCES	250.00
2659	1/30/2015	00298690 MIDWEST TAPE	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	LIBRARY	AV MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	292.80
2660	1/30/2015	00298691 MIDWEST TAPE	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	LIBRARY	AV MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	77.68
2661	1/30/2015	00298692 MIDWEST TAPE	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	LIBRARY	AV MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	394.59
2662	1/30/2015	00298693 MIDWEST TAPE	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	LIBRARY	AV MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	29.97
2663	1/30/2015	00298694 MIDWEST TAPE	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	LIBRARY	AV MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	742.49
2664	1/30/2015	00298695 MIDWEST TAPE	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	LIBRARY	AV MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	554.35
2665	1/30/2015	00298696 MIDWEST TAPE	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	LIBRARY	AV MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	1,004.76
2666	1/30/2015	00298697 MIDWEST TAPE	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	LIBRARY	AV MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	5,936.09
2667	1/30/2015	00298705 STONEWALL JACKSON HOTEL AND CO	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	MANAGEMENT SERVICES ADMIN	EDUCATION AND CONFERENCES	131.26
2668	1/30/2015	00298706 SWANA	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	WASTE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY	DUES ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP	200.00
2669	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	0.03
2670	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	BUILDING INSPECTIONS	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	0.05
2671	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	CIRCUIT COURT CLERK	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	0.07
2672	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	COMMISSIONER OF THE REVENUE	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	0.97
2673	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	COMMONWEALTHS ATTORNEY	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	8.05
2674	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	9.37
2675	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION CTR	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	41.91
2676	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	COOPERATIVE EXTENSION	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	0.32
2677	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	FIRE DEPARTMENT	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	13.45
2678	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	0.35
2679	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	INFORMATION SYSTEMS TECHNOLOGY	INCTY TELEPHONE CHGS	2,027.48
2680	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	JUVENILE DETENTION HOME	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	6.47
2681	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	JUVENILE PROBATION	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	0.04
2682	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	MENTAL HEALTH SUP SVCS	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	62.27
2683	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	PARKS AND RECREATION	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	2.08
2684	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	POLICE DEPARTMENT	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	3.50
2685	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	SHERIFF	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	4.42
2686	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	WASTE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	0.11
2687	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	RISK MANAGEMENT FUND	RISK MANAGEMENT	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	1.40
2688	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	VEHICLE AND COMMUNICATION FUND	FLEET MANAGEMENT DIVISION	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	0.26
2689	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	WATER FUND	WATER	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	0.02
2690	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	WASTEWATER FUND	WASTEWATER	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	0.03
2691	1/30/2015	00298710 VERIZON	AIRPORT FUND	AIRPORT	OTHER LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE	1.20
2692	1/30/2015	00298713 VIRGINIA COUNCIL ON JUVENILE D	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	JUVENILE DETENTION HOME	TRAINING SVCS	250.00
2693	1/30/2015	00298717 HUGHES-CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT.	WATER FUND	WATER	OTHER CHGS AND SERVICES	9.60
2694	1/30/2015	00298717 HUGHES-CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT.	WASTEWATER FUND	WASTEWATER	OTHER CHGS AND SERVICES	6.40
2695	1/30/2015	00298718 HUGHES-CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT.	WATER FUND	WATER	OTHER CHGS AND SERVICES	9.60
2696	1/30/2015	00298718 HUGHES-CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT.	WASTEWATER FUND	WASTEWATER	OTHER CHGS AND SERVICES	6.40
2697	1/30/2015	00298719 HUGHES-CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT.	WATER FUND	WATER	OTHER CHGS AND SERVICES	9.60
2698	1/30/2015	00298719 HUGHES-CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT.	WASTEWATER FUND	WASTEWATER	OTHER CHGS AND SERVICES	6.40
2699	1/30/2015	00298720 PLASTIC PRODUCTS INCORPORATED	CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND	PARKS AND RECREATION	OTHER CONTRACTUAL SVCS	9,383.98
2700	1/30/2015	00298721 WLEPCO TREASURER CHIEF STAN OL	GENERAL OPERATING FUND	SHERIFF	REGISTRATION FEES	250.00
2701						
2702						\$ 11,695,935.87

AP Payments

Ready Average: 8679.477648 Count: 18873 Sum: 23399871.74 68%