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Innovation 10 Wins



Stormwater Monitoring collaboration and award

Wake County is a key contributor to the North Carolina Regional Water Level Monitoring project. This project was selected as the winner of the International Data Corporation's 2020 Smart Cities North America Awards (Smart Water Category) for its novel and collaborative approach to addressing stormwater emergencies from a regional perspective. This project is part of a larger initiative (with private and public partners including: RIoT, Cisco, SAS, Green Stream Technologies, Oracle, NC Emergency Management, NC Department of Transportation, City of Wilson, City of Raleigh, Town of Cary, Town of Holly Springs and Town of Morrisville) to create shared data standards and platforms that can be used to optimize operational functions, drive economic growth and improve the quality of life for its citizens.



Healthy Habits when working from Home Class

Wake County and the world pivoted on a dime as COVID began to envelop communities. Overnight, Team Wake had to change how we work. Many employees struggled with the unique challenges that come with working from home. The “new normal” suddenly meant managing your own work while also educating children from home, as well as sharing workspace and bandwidth with spouses who were also home all day. A larger conversation about how to deal with these challenges was needed. With help from our partners, the innovation team pulled research, developed a curriculum and rolled out a class early in the pandemic. More than 120 staff members participating across nine sessions attended the “Healthy Habits When Working from Home” class to learn how to establish routines, operational transparency, being intentional about one’s wellbeing and a few other topics.





here at the shelter! We are asking everyone to do their part and take this pledge to protect their own health and the health of their friends by making a few small changes. Please take the pledge with us!

To help protect myself and my community, **I pledge to:**

Wash or sanitize my hands well and often, especially:

- ✓ When I first get to the shelter
- ✓ Before and after I eat
- ✓ After using the bathroom
- ✓ After blowing my nose or touching my face
- ✓ After touching door handles or other things people touch a lot
- ✓ After shaking hands or touching other people (no offense!)



Find new ways to greet people other than shaking hands. I will try to stay about 2 arm lengths away from people, when I can.



Limit the number of people that I come in contact with- just until the virus is under control. An example is: I could room, eat, and hang out with only the same small group of people for a few weeks (in case one of us gets sick- we won't expose too many other people). I won't share cups, drinks, food, or cigarettes with



Wake follows
THE 3Ws



Wear

Wait

Wash



At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, residents of the county's homeless shelters were being housed in a mass care facility (rather than hotel rooms). There was concern about guests following established rules for mask wearing, hand washing, and social distancing while at the shelter, as well as during the day. Innovation partnered with shelter staff to create a "pledge" to follow COVID guidelines, signed by guests and displayed on a wall to show their commitment to protecting themselves and fellow guests. The pledge was a huge success. Adherence improved, and guests reported that it made them feel safer. They even competed to see which dorm could have more "pledgers." To reduce viral spread, guests were required to eat in shifts instead of all at once. Although initially disliked by some guests, reframing it as having a "dinner reservation" and assurances that food would be rationed equitably contributed to its success.

Behaviorally-based
PLEDGE helps with
COVID compliance

Surplus Computer Transfer



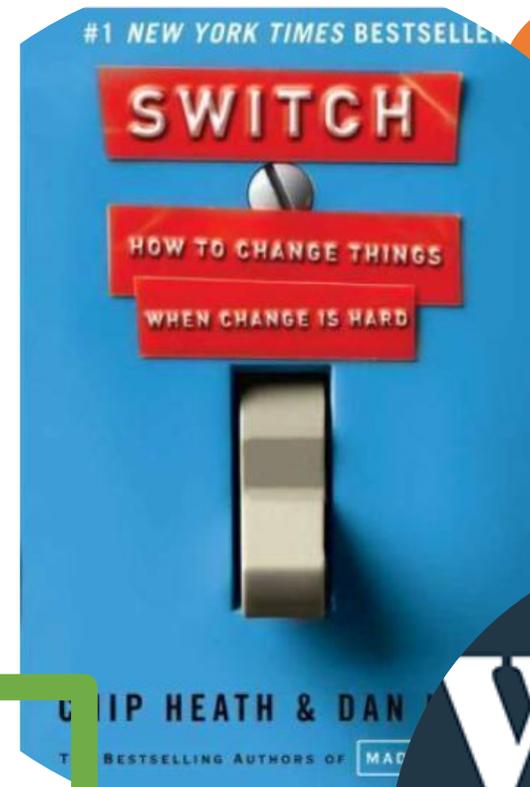
Innovation was charged with exploring how the County's limited amount of "usable surplus" can be donated/repurposed in a manner that will have ongoing benefit to citizens. Wake County currently maximizes the use of ALL equipment, which results in minimum discard of equipment that has any additional life. However, it was decided that if even the life of one device could be extended to help the community, Wake County wanted to be a part of that. Innovation worked with legal, contracts and IT to develop a process that would legally and securely facilitate the donation of computer equipment that would have otherwise been discarded. In November 2020, the Wake County Board of Commissioners approved the transfer of surplus computer equipment that has reached the end of its useful life to the Kramden Institute. Kramden refurbishes the equipment for students whose families cannot afford to purchase it. By collecting, refurbishing, and awarding computers to students and families without one in the home, as well as providing tools and training, Kramden is bridging the digital divide and reducing e-waste. This was an excellent win for Wake County!

Book Club Launch

You spend a quarter of your life at work. Innovation believes that employees should enjoy it! Innovation launched a book club providing a platform for reading and discussing content, ideas and strategies with colleagues.

The first book was *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*. The podcast was by Organizational Psychologist Adam Grant, who specializes in taking the reader inside the minds of some of the world's most unusual professionals to discover the keys to better work life. From learning how to love your rivals to harnessing the power of frustration, one thing's for sure, staff saw their jobs differently. Adam Grant has a wealth of information and the group also listened to and discussed some of the podcast and had open discussions.

The Innovation team hosted informal virtual meetups with employees to discuss the featured books and podcasts. Conversations were focused on enhancing the way employees work in a manner they find more personally and professionally effective. These meetups allowed individuals to discuss content in the books and podcasts and incorporate information they may have learned in other Innovation classes; while merging practical implications for active projects and gaining insights from one another.



Wake UAS Program Launch

The Wake County Innovation Team expanded services to include drones, also referred to as Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). Innovation began with experiments and quickly discovered multiple use cases where UAS save time and assist departments to tell a story with a different perspective. Albert Einstein said, “You can’t solve a problem on the same level it was created. You have to rise above it to the next level.” Drones help us do just that. Often the solution for a problem changes when you rise above the weeds. One department stated, “We are always looking for more opportunities to showcase our work with the public. Aerial imagery and videos collected with a drone are engaging and allow us to showcase our work in an innovative way.”

Drone applications are an emerging area in the conservation arena, and we were excited for the chance to conduct a pilot with the Soil and Water Conservation Department and apply this technology to our work for the citizens of Wake County. The group identified a host of opportunities for improvement through use of a drone. The use of this equipment allowed departments to imagine other possibilities. Another group stated, “Incorporating a drone into our daily work would save many days and hours of work. For example, when visiting large farms with multiple fields, staff could collect photo documentation from a central location instead of walking each field. The speed and quality with which we can document a project with a drone far surpasses what is done on foot with an iPhone.” A project that would typically take staff 6-8 hours to complete, could be completed in 1-2 hours with the use of the drone technology.

Drone use is also credited with a reduction of staff injury. It helps avoid potentially hazardous or inaccessible areas, such as flooded areas and fenced-off livestock fields. Having to walk all areas by foot on farms and forested areas increases the risk of staff injuries due to trips, falls and other outdoor hazards.

Another experiment by the Innovation team used a drone to identify illegal uses of a specific property. Currently, staff are unable to regularly visit open-space properties and attempt to assess illegal uses by walking the property perimeter and North-South and East-West transects. If drone technology can affordably identify issues, staff can focus their time instead on remediation, better achieving the goals of the open-space program adopted by the Board of Commissioners.

The Wake UAS program is growing and being embraced by many departments.



Regional Innovation Academy

Wake County Innovation Team planted the seed with Triangle J Council of Governments (TJCOG) to develop the Regional Innovation Academy. This program is the first of its kind in the country, and it aims to offer local government leaders from communities of every size the opportunity to develop new skills, collaborate with peers, and learn data-driven approaches for creating efficient, future-ready, public-sector solutions. Selected participants will engage in six virtual classes from January to March 2021 on building creative designs, identifying community needs, measuring outcomes, piloting new solutions, improving customer experience, and communicating results.

At a time when local budgets are tight and the most pressing challenges in the region cross community lines, the Academy will allow participating governments to share resources and expertise, build staff capacity, and create the relationships necessary to prosper. In the face of public health and economic crises, local governments are often forced to place innovation and collaboration on the backburner as they address pressing day-to-day concerns. The Academy will provide a space for participants to step back, think strategically about the way community needs are changing, and implement more effective solutions. Equally important, it will offer tailored opportunities for staff from small, medium, and large communities to reimagine their daily work and long-term strategic planning.

The Academy became an initiative of TJCOG's Strategy and Innovation Network, a collaborative group of government employees working on and interested in developing their knowledge of strategy and innovation skills. A task force comprised of network individuals representing the towns of Hillsborough and Cary, the City of Raleigh, and Wake County has guided the development of the Academy application process and syllabus.



design tools?



Designed for employees from local governments of all sizes, the Triangle J Council of Governments' Innovation Academy will teach you data-driven design thinking approaches to improve your work and career.

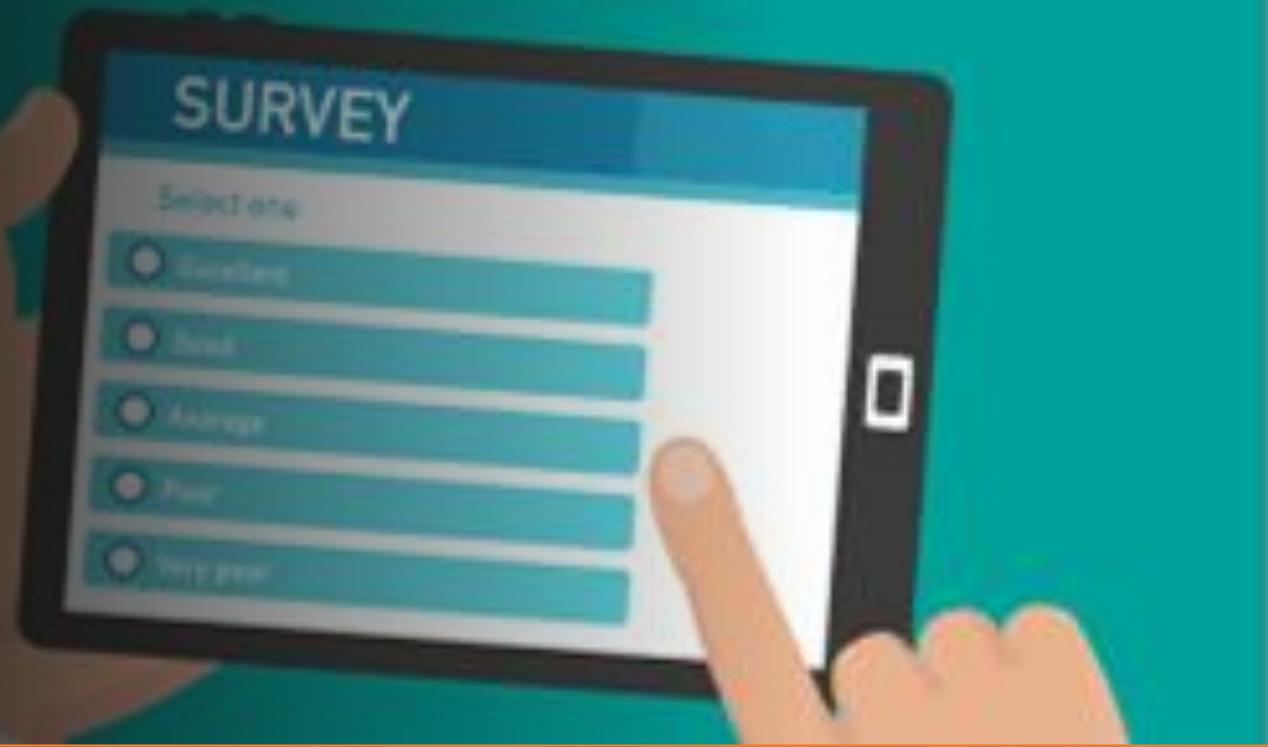
Join local government leaders for six virtual classes exploring:

1. How do you design creative solutions?
 2. How do you measure success?
 3. How do you test solutions?
 4. How do you conduct human-centered design?
- How do you evaluate user experience?
How do you communicate results?

Innovation Academy is a free and interactive three-month program for local government employees in strategically creating efficient, effective solutions.



Organizations require feedback from customers, employees, and stakeholders in order to succeed and grow. Surveys can capture feedback that informs important decisions or guides service design, but they often fail to live up to their potential. Innovation helps teams ask the right questions of the right people in the right way. We assist departments in designing well-constructed surveys, using the right tools for their specific customer experience evaluation needs, and administering these surveys using channels that support high response rates from a representative sample of citizens. This year we have worked with many departments and programs to change their customer satisfaction surveys and create new surveys to assess community needs. Just a few examples include: 1. Evaluating citizen COVID safety behavior and safety perceptions, 2. Fire services, 3. Permitting and planning, 4. Animal center satisfaction, and 5. Assessment of the EOC functionality, processes, and EOC employee wellbeing



Enhancing surveys
to increase engagement
and understand needs



Exploration of Enterprise Software Solutions & Partnership



Due to the pandemic, interest in trying new things and figuring out efficient ways to do business has increased. The Innovation office helped departments explore technology as they considered enhancements and possibilities. Innovation reached across departments and silos, bringing together groups that don't typically work together, to test software solutions and specifically explore whether the software identified could serve as an enterprise or multi-department solution. Capital Area Workforce Development, Human Resources, Child Welfare, Social & Economic Vitality, Emergency Operations Center, Emergency Management, Communications, General Services, Animal Services, Human Services Program & Staff Development, and Libraries were all participants. Examples of software solutions explored are Newsco, Redcap, Piktochart, Vyond, and Adobe Connect. This allows exploration of value and functionality prior to departments entering into long-term contracts and costly purchases for products that may just sit on a “shelf” with no use.