



The Districts Awards Program recognizes and shares bright ideas across transit, transportation, libraries, fire districts, parks and recreation, airports, ports and more! For 2021 we recognized the top 10 submissions which are listed below.

For any questions regarding the awards program or submission process please contact [Janet Gransitt](#).

Award Categories

Technology Innovation: Citizens

This category recognizes districts that have utilized tech to improve service delivery to citizens – for example, making physical services available online, deploying new citizen engagement solutions, enhancing user experience, et al.

Technology Innovation: Operations

This category recognizes districts that have utilized tech to improve internal operations with employees – for example reengineering business processes, enhancing security measures, et al.

Technology Innovation: Leadership

This category recognizes district leaders who have led innovative tech initiatives. The nomination should highlight vision, leadership and the use of information technology.

2021 Winners

West



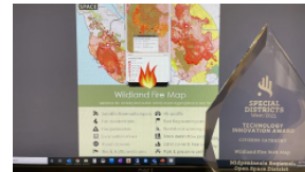
Citizens Category: Oxnard Harbor District/Port of Hueneme - Fathomwerx On-Site Makerspace and STEM Education

The FATHOMWERX collaboration, located onsite at the port, is a technological test and build site for first responders, UAV and drones, and community businesses. Donations from the Navy of more than \$3.5 million contribute to the lab and makerspace. Over 300 local high school STEM students attend the annual Expo.



Citizens Category: King County Library System - Leveraging Technology to Bridge the Digital Divide

To bridge the digital divide for at-risk populations most affected by the pandemic, KCLS purchased 270 Wi-Fi hotspots with data plans, 220 remote patron laptops and teleconferencing technology, and introduced contact-free lockers for materials pickup. The hotspots and laptops were delivered to designated assisted living and retirement centers, homeless communities, refugee organizations and service provider locations.



Citizens Category: Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District - Wildland Fire Web Map

Until this map was created, information on the California Lightning Complex Fires was dispersed among multiple websites. The real-time map using Esri's ArcGIS Online (AGOL) synthesizes over 40 data layers and data from local, state and federal agencies. The map answered the public's vital questions and went viral across social media platforms with 1,000 hits per hour.



Operations Category: Costa Mesa Sanitary District - Artificial Intelligence Sewer Manhole Detection Model

CMSD is using artificial intelligence, vehicle cameras and the cloud to detect the condition of sewer manhole covers. This method is safer for employees and saves more than 680 inspection hours and \$40,000 annually.



Operations Category: East Bay Regional Park District - Information Systems – COVID-19 Safety/Operating Innovations

The district launched an Employee Safety and Service portal to capture inquiries; report safety hazards; and disseminate information about exposure and building entry protocols, OSHA requirements, how to set up a tailgate safety meeting and COVID paid leave policies. The transition to virtual public and employee meetings was smooth for the administrative office and rapidly put in place for staff serving the district's 73 parks.



Operations Category: Inland Empire Regional Composting Authority - Operations Innovation

IEUA is a special district in San Bernardino, Calif., that processes over 200,000 tons of waste products into high-quality compost annually. The compost is used locally to create healthy soils which require far less water. The entire production and ventilation system is monitored and operated remotely. The facility uses renewable energy produced by 10,000 solar panels and more, saving rate payers over one million kilowatt hours annually.

Government Technology
Special Districts National Awards
Technology Innovation: Operations Category
Using Technology to Enhance Internal Operations and to Increase Engagement with the Public

SAFETY FIRST, OPERATIONS, TRAINING AND HIRING

The East Bay Regional Park District is a system of beautiful parklands in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, east of San Francisco. We preserve and protect over 125,000 acres in 73 parks, including 1,250 miles of trails and 55 miles of shoreline. Our parks are ideal for healthful recreation – hiking, biking, picnicking, camping, swimming, fishing, and boating. We service over 2.8 million people.

The Park District transitioned to remote work swiftly in March 2020, successfully sending the 160 employees in the Administration Office home to work remotely with little advance notice. The Park District's elected Board of Directors also transitioned to remote-virtual public meetings with the help and leadership of our Information System Department. Prior to the Shelter-in-Place Order, the Park District public meetings were 100 percent in-person. The transition to live-virtual public meetings accessible on YouTube and available online through the Park District website has provided access to the residents of Alameda and Contra Costa counties that we serve.

Over the past decade, the Park District has invested in its personnel, facilities and equipment to prepare it for a situation like COVID. This transition to working remotely was successful because the Information Systems Department had up-to-date technology allowing remote access to District servers and had been utilizing Microsoft TEAMS virtual meetings, One-Drive file sharing and SharePoint for information sharing. The challenge was that the rest of the Park District employees were not using these technologies and required immediate access and training to utilize these communication and technology tools.

During this time of the Shelter-in-Place orders, the Park District was also actively engaging with our underserved communities and health officers. The new technologies provided ways to reach residents in a timely and innovative way.

SAFETY FIRST

The Park District launched an internal [COVID-19 SharePoint intranet site](#) to provide information to staff regarding coronavirus information, protocols, procedures, alerts, and links to resources. The site was created within 7 days of the State and County COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders, which required all District employee to stay home until the proper procedures and personal protective equipment were secured. This site contains 47 linked pages of information and over 500 documents. The information includes District-wide messages, FAQ's, COVID Prevention Plan and Operational Handbooks, Building Entry Protocols and Exposure Protocols/Decision maps. There are also resources for employees related to new COVID paid leave policies, employee assistance/wellness programs and links to CDC and county health department sites.

The Park District includes 73 park sites with employees working across two counties which made it difficult to capture employee safety or technology-related questions, comments, or work requests. In response to the situation, the Park District launched an [Employee Safety and Service portal](#) to capture employee inquiries, reports on safety hazards, technology requests; and for employees to get

information about air quality, OSHA requirements, how to set up a tailgate safety meeting. The system captures and tracks tickets and sends them to the departments responsible for timely communication of relevant information.

OPERATIONS

The Information Services Department's rapid response to COVID-19 improved and expanded VPN access to all internal network for staff to work remotely and throughout our 73 park sites during the pandemic. They purchased and deployed 200 new laptops to address technology support for worker productivity and to provide for virtual meetings.

Wi-fi access was provided to enhance programing capabilities, such as for interpretive staff programs while leading mine tours in Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve. Several park locations now have Wi-Fi access for interpretive programs as well. Wi-fi access has also been provided for the patio at the Administration Building and to expand new outdoor workspace, parklets were created in the former parking area to provide new safe outdoor workspaces during COVID.

The ERP-Financial System was modified to provide remote timecard entry and electronic approvals for 800+ employees without accessing a District device and it successfully allowed for implementation of new federal and state required COVID sick leave mandates.

The District held all public meetings via Zoom and YouTube using PrimeGov. TEAMS was deployed as the preferred meeting platform and was used to run our Emergency Operations Center weekly during the 14 months of the District's Disaster declaration.

TRAINING AND HIRING

The Park District implemented a new online Summit Training Portal accessible 24/7 by all employees. This new training system allowed for dissemination of required COVID protocols, building entry policies and procedures, the COVID Prevention Plan, and other essential safety training. The system allows training to be assigned to particular employees, tracks employees' assignments and progress, and notifies supervisors when training is overdue or completed. The system has also been deployed for mandatory trainings such as harassment, OSHA-related or supervisor training. This portal has been valuable when employees are required to self-quarantine with little notice if exposed to Covid-19. It provided employees the opportunity to do training from home on any device.

We expanded the District-wide online hiring process and remote on-boarding of new employees. This allowed newly hired employees to complete all necessary documentation for benefits and payroll, such as tax and banking forms, electronically without needing to physically come to the District Administration office. The Park District had previously implemented the online application process when new jobs are available but has recently expanded it to include internal opportunities.

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