



ABOUT KITSAP COUNTY

Kitsap County has a population of over 240,000 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The County seat is located in the town of Port Orchard. Kitsap County is situated along the western shore of the central Puget Sound region and ranks 36th in size among Washington counties. Kitsap County is the 2nd most densely populated county in the state. www.kitsapgov.com is the source of government information for citizens and stakeholders in County.

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- Vickie Bushnell, Education and Communications Coordinator for Kitsap County Solid Waste Division

Providing enhanced service to citizens through real-time information updates

Situation

One of the greatest challenges faced in local government is getting important information to residents who want it. Kitsap County is set in a unique portion of the State of Washington, directly between the urban areas of Seattle and Tacoma and the wilderness of the Olympic Mountains, but the County is not unique in knowing that they need to leverage digital communications to increase delivery of information to its residents.

Earlier this year, Kitsap County owned and managed a single subscription list of more than 1,000 subscribers for the County Road Reports. The County and its residents understood the value of electronic communication, but, with a goal to expand the amount and variety of information offered electronically, it was not feasible to manage multiple subscription lists in-house. County officials were looking for a more global list service and hoped to find a solution that would deliver news and updates directly to residents as well as several internal newsletters to employees.

Solution

On June 1, 2011, Kitsap County implemented GovDelivery Digital Communication Management (DCM), a software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution, to help them manage their increased digital communications efforts. The solution, a part of Kitsap’s Public Communications Program, was publicly named KENS – short for Kitsap County Electronic Notification System – and allows residents to sign up to receive email or text message notifications about information that is of interest to them. “We see this as an effective tool in our outreach toolbox. With this service we can put important information directly in the hands of people who want it, without them having to look for it,” said Vickie Bushnell, Education and Communications Coordinator for Kitsap County Solid Waste Division.

The system offers Kitsap County automatic and real-time distribution of information updates, assured deliverability, and opt-in service. Residents are able to subscribe to receive the information they want, through their preferred medium, in the desired frequency that will keep them interested and engaged.

County officials are also interested in leveraging social media and appreciate the system’s integration with Facebook and other popular social media sites, such as YouTube and Twitter. “The added advantage of simultaneous posting to Facebook,” continues Bushnell, “allows our friends, and their friends, to learn about events and activities they may never have otherwise heard of.”

Additionally, the “Share This” feature allows recipients of email notifications to immediately post interesting information to their social media networks, furthering the reach of Kitsap County’s information and increasing the County’s effectiveness.

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- Doug Bear, Communications Program Manager, Kitsap County

PROGRESS

Since launching GovDelivery in June 2011, Kitsap County has:

- More than 5,000 subscribers
- Sent over 82,000 emails to subscribers
- Over 30 subscription topics

**Results as of November 2011*

Results

Since implementing the system in June 2011, more than 1,400 residents have subscribed through KENS to receive updates. The County offers residents updates on more than 30 unique topics including:

- Volunteer Opportunities
- Superior Court Docket updates
- Community Development News
- Online Bidding Opportunities
- Inclement Weather/Emergency information

“During inclement weather when facilities are closed or operations are delayed, we have the ability to send messages in real time to let customers know about breaking news and events,” said Doug Bear, Communications Program Manager. KENS operates on a SaaS platform, allowing system administrators to access the system and send notifications from any place at any time.

In August 2011, representatives from Kitsap County leveraged the annual Kitsap County Fair to increase subscribers, speaking with residents about KENS and encouraging those who hadn’t already subscribed to sign up for email or text notifications, as well as ‘like’ the County’s Facebook page. Residents who visited the County’s booth received magnets and handouts that promoted the service as well, and “as people find the need for information, these takeaways will direct them to subscribe and allow them to take advantage of the services offered through our partnership with GovDelivery,” according Bear. The service is also promoted through a special icon at the top-right corner of the Kitsap County’s homepage.

Kitsap County was recognized as the Excellence in Digital Communications (EIDC) award winner in the third quarter of 2011 for its efforts to improve communication with residents through active promotion of its electronic notification system (KENS). According to Bushnell, “We see [the GovDelivery solution] as a way to provide a higher level of service to our residents.”

