July 11, 2024 – The Center for Digital Government (CDG) and the National Association of Counties (NACo) have announced the winners of the 22nd Annual Digital Counties Survey. The survey, in partnership with NACo, identifies the best technology practices among U.S. counties, including initiatives that streamline delivery of government services; provide data analytics to allow decisions based on performance and outcomes; enhance cybersecurity; and apply innovative and emerging technologies to county priorities.

"This year's survey results highlight how counties are responsibly embracing new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence in its various forms and other digital tools and platforms to respond to top priorities of their constituents and elected officials," said Teri Takai, senior vice-president, CDG. "The Center for Digital Government is excited to recognize and congratulate this year's winners for their accomplishments and continuing efforts to use technology to make government better."

"The Digital Counties Survey illustrates how counties are on the cutting-edge, pursuing innovative approaches to serve our residents," said NACo Executive Director Matthew Chase. "Counties are thoughtfully adopting technologies like artificial intelligence and data platforms to enhance civic engagement, increase efficiency, and strengthen our communities today and for the future."

This year's first-place winners are:

- Alameda County, Calif. (1,000,000 or more population category):

Alameda County's "IT People Plan" is a model workforce recruitment and retention plan emphasizing staff development - resulting in a 50% lower turnover rate. The county drafted a Generative AI Policy and produced eight successful AI projects including AI chatbots that reduced the volume of help tickets by 80% and an app which successfully matched 40% of unhoused residents with permanent housing. The county also launched a Health Equity Portal.

- Jefferson County, Colo. (500,000 – 999,999 population category):

Jefferson County reorganized to focus on their digital experience and also to align with their diversity, equity and inclusion goals by developing frameworks and by considerable effort towards broadband equity. The "Secure Jeffco" plan is commendable not only for aligning to national standards, but also for taking a strategic view of cybersecurity that includes both infrastructure and humans. The county's innovative fellowship program includes a partnership with MIT.

- Chesterfield County, Va. (250,000-499,999 population category):

Chesterfield County collaboration efforts are exemplary - for example, the required staff training in cybersecurity is now available to vendors. They established the collaborative Web Content Contributors (WCC) Community of Practice, and new collaborative data governance policies. Business process reengineering in land development departments reduced the amount of time to complete resident

services and improved the project delivery metrics by almost 50 percent.

- Arlington County, Va. (150,000-249,999 population category):

The county appointed a Customer Relationship Manager to oversee constituent interactions for the constituent experience/omnichannel program. For example, they implemented a unified payment system across all county departments. Arlington continues to innovate using AI and Machine Learning, for example to distinguish emergency and non-emergency public safety calls. The county furthered their cybersecurity goals with nine tabletop cyber emergency exercises involving more than 400 employees.

- Calvert County, Md. (up to 150,000 population category):

Calvert County implemented a Data Classification Policy to systematically classify and safeguard data, and launched several OpenAI-powered chatbots, including John the Legal Eagle, Workday, Wizard, and the Calvert County Retirement Chatbot. They established an AI Committee to guide and oversee the integration and ethical use of AI technologies, reinforcing their commitment to responsible data governance.

CDG expresses its gratitude to the Digital Communities underwriters of this year's survey and awards program: Premier Members - Avanade and Amazon Web Services; Standard Members - SHI International Corp. and Workday.

Congratulations to the 2024 Digital Counties Survey Winners!

1 Million or More Population
1st County of Alameda, CA
2nd Fairfax County, VA
3rd County of San Diego, CA
4th Wake County, NC
5th Cook County, IL
6th Orange County, FL
6th County of San Bernardino, CA
7th Gwinnett County, GA
8th Hennepin County, MN
8th Palm Beach County, FL
9th Miami Dade County, FL
10th Franklin County, OH

500,000-999,999 Population
1st Jefferson County, CO
2nd Snohomish County, WA
3rd New Castle County, DE
3rd Westchester County, NY
4th DeKalb County, GA
5th Cobb County, GA

6th Macomb County, MI
7th County of San Mateo, CA
8th Polk County, FL
9th County of Ventura, CA
10th County of Chester, PA

250,000-499,999 Population
1st Chesterfield County, VA
2nd County of Cumberland, NC
3rd Prince William County, VA
4th Leon County, FL
5th County of Placer, CA
5th County of Sonoma, CA
6th Dutchess County, NY
6th Lane County, OR
7th Sarasota County, FL
8th Durham County, NC
9th Solano County, CA
10th Hamilton County, IN

150,000-249,999 Population
1st Arlington County, VA
2nd Cabarrus County, NC
3rd Stafford County, VA
4th County of Barnstable, MA
5th Onslow County, NC
6th Union County, NC
7th Pitt County, NC
8th Charlotte County, FL
9th County of Davidson, NC
10th Berkeley County, SC

Up to 150,000 Population
1st Calvert County, MD
2nd County of York, VA
3rd Bedford County, VA
4th County of Nevada, CA
5th James City County, VA
6th Coconino Co, AZ
6th Dodge County, WI
7th County of Albemarle, VA
8th Franklin County, VA
9th Orange County, VA
10th Sherburne County, MN

SELECTED SURVEY FINDINGS:

CIOs' Top 10 priorities reported in this year's survey:

#1 - For the 11th year in a row, Cybersecurity is at the top of the priority list.

- The largest percentage of counties – 43% - is spending 6-10 percent of their IT budget on cybersecurity. This is an increase of 5% in spending over last year.

#2 - Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning including Pilots

- A new item this year, AI/Machine Learning was reported by counties as their second-highest priority!

#3 - Application Modernization – moved up from fifth last year.

#4 - Hire/retain/nurture competent IT personnel – moved down from second last year.

- 75% of those surveyed have programs in place for hiring and retention of IT staff that utilize emerging technologies.

#5 - Constituent/Customer Engagement and Experience moved down two spots, as many counties report focused programs and progress made in several areas.

#6 - Business intelligence/analytics moved up to sixth from eighth.

#7 - Agency/Departmental IT collaboration – moved up from to ninth last year.

#8 - Budget and cost control moved down from sixth.

#9 - Cloud computing and Business Process Automation are tied at ninth. Neither was on the Top 10 list last year.

#10 - IT governance – moved up to the Top 10 list from # 12 last year.

Additional survey results:

- The survey showed that the most pressing number 1 challenge that counties faced this year and last year was funding constraints including multi-year funding.

- Staff shortages moved up from number 9 last year to the number 2 challenge this year:

    - The top 5 disciplines in which staff are needed are:

        - #1 – Cybersecurity

        - #2 – Application Building, Integration and Modernization

        - #3 – Data Analytics/Business Intelligence

- #4 – Process Improvement and Modernization

- #5 – Artificial Intelligence Modeling

CLICK HERE for the article on the top 10 winners who are being honored at a special awards event during the National Association of Counties annual conference on July 12 in Hillsborough County, Florida.

About the Center for Digital Government:

The **Center for Digital Government** is a national research and advisory institute focused on technology policy and best practices in state and local government. CDG provides public- and private-sector leaders with decision support and actionable insight to help drive 21st-century government. CDG is a division of e.Republic, the nation's largest data, media and events company for state and local government and education.

About NACo:

The **National Association of Counties** (http://www.naco.org) strengthens America's counties, including nearly 40,000 county elected officials and 3.6 million county employees. Founded in 1935, NACo unites county officials to advocate for county government priorities in federal policymaking; promote exemplary county policies and practices; nurture leadership skills and expand knowledge networks; optimize county and taxpayer resources and cost savings; and enrich the public's understanding of county government.

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