2011 Transforming Local
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"Making Magic – How Bold Can Government Be?"
Case Study Application
Georgetown County Hurricane Project, South Carolina

Cover Sheet Information

I. General Information
- Case Study Title: Georgetown County Hurricane Project
- Jurisdiction Name: Georgetown County, South Carolina
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Synopsis

The Georgetown County Hurricane Project of South Carolina arms local folks in a southern, coastal, rural area through a variety of innovative means with key knowledge and skills to face and respond effectively to hurricane dangers.

Since the spring of 2009, activities have so far involved the following creative processes:

- Teens digitally videotaping interviews with 150 hurricane survivors;

- Children acting in ten 30-second television PSAs;

- Residents gathering and sharing disaster photographs through the county's online digital history Internet website (www.gcdigital.org);

- Staff learning Web 2.0 information technologies to inform and interact with citizens;

- Young people understanding better planning for natural disasters of all types – earthquakes, floods, forest fires, hurricanes, etc. – through free, serious interactive Internet games like Stop Disasters (www.stopdisastersgame.org);

- Citizens participating in special educational events including a hurricane community day with over 600 persons.

The project has directly impacted so far 1 out of every 35 residents in Georgetown County. The effort centers on a very unique, creative, productive, high-profile collaboration between concerned citizens and the county's public library and emergency management division. It is funded by tax dollars and grants in a manner to keep it current in an ongoing manner. It has involved much staff energy and time but has never encountered any serious obstacles while producing significant results.

It has been featured at two statewide meetings involving emergency managers and public librarians. It has just won the South Carolina Association of Counties' J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award for innovation in places with populations of 50,000 to 125,000. It is presently highlighted in the ICMA's national magazine's lead story on innovative civic collaborations involving U.S. public libraries.

Nothing else like it exists in America.

Presentation Components

1. Innovation/Creativity

On September 22, 1989, Hurricane Hugo slammed into our rural coastal area with 135-mph winds and a twenty-foot storm surge. The results were devastating. An International City County Management Association (ICMA) Grant initially enabled Georgetown County, in FY09-10, to revisit and to learn lessons of this awful experience by facilitating an18-month collaboration of our public library and our emergency management department. This work is currently being funded by a grant from the National Library of Medicine along with local tax dollars. This unusual partnership has allowed both the emergency management office and the public library to reach double the number of residents, educating them on hurricane safety and on our fascinating and foreboding storm history. We have not only utilized traditional offerings like public lectures combined with informational materials and announcements but also inventive approaches like video-game simulations, Web 2.0 communication techniques, oral-history video interviews, digital storytelling, and the creation of a digital collection of historic hurricane photographs and documents. Our results are detailed below in the "Outcomes Achieved" section of this application.

In the initiation of this project, the first step in accomplishing our objectives was to establish a Hurricane Project Oversight Committee. This group served to guide the project. Its members consisted of the Chairman of County Council, the Library Director, the Emergency Services Manager, other staff, and citizen volunteers. Some members of this group had already met prior to starting the project to plan its major parameters, and later, others were quickly added to the team and helped to fill in the details. The first major task of the Hurricane Project Oversight Committee was hiring a Hurricane Project Manager. The committee selected someone with a background in broadcast journalism. She had worked previously as a television anchor and as a newspaper reporter, and she had already organized several media campaigns for the public library while working with the library on three oral-history video projects, including most recently interviewing World War II Veterans. Because she has three children, she desired only a part-time post, and she loved youngsters. Her attitude was extremely upbeat, and her energy level was known generally throughout the community as being quite high. When she actually accepted the post, she went into action immediately and made this project definitely thrive. With the help of the Oversight Committee, she developed a detailed plan of action for the entire enterprise, initiated bids for purchases of goods and services, began the public-relations campaign, and outlined a series of workshops on preparing for and responding to the effects of hurricanes. She also suggested methods to record these activities digitally for posterity.

While some might have expected a project involving such an "Odd Couple" as an emergency management department and a public library to encounter some significant complications, that expectation was not the case. Instead, everyone worked well together. This success was due to this fact: These entities had already joined together previously in actually preparing for possible hurricane strikes. Their staffs had slept on the floor of the Emergency Operations Center together during the height of tropical storms and Category-1 and Category-2 Hurricanes. They had sweated bullets together as larger hurricanes skimmed our shore. They had manned telephones

together at midnight to inform citizens of shelters, open escape routes, and sources of help. They had learned over time to trust each other personally, to know one another's individual capabilities and foibles intimately, and to have formed bonds of professional respect and sometimes friendship. In this instance, familiarity did not breed contempt; it engendered mutual esteem. While there were some minor bumps in the road, there existed already a solid foundation to help this new collaboration to succeed fully in producing an educational and informational Hurricane Project of substantial magnitude.

2. Outcomes Achieved

About 1,400 persons from a wide variety of backgrounds – or approximately 1 in 35 of the county's population – participated actively in this project in the following ways:

- 60 members of different county government agencies – including the auditor's office, recreation and community services department, planning department, building department, sheriff's office, and, of course, the public library and the emergency management department – attended hands-on workshops on using Web 2.0 applications in a practical manner to better inform citizens;
- 40 heads of non-profit agencies attended a three-hour lecture and discussion on hurricane preparedness devised especially for them;
- 100 affluent residents participated in five one-hour hurricane informational sessions held mainly on the Waccamaw Neck;
- 150 community leaders and long-term residents provided oral-history video interviews on their hurricane memories;
- 72 teenagers actually produced these oral-history hurricane video interviews while learning new technical skills;
- 100 children participated as stars in ten public-service announcements on preparing for hurricanes and other natural disasters;
- 150 youngsters learned how to plan for hurricanes through a serious, Internet video-game developed by the United Nations called "Stop Disasters";
- 60 family members learned how to produce scrapbooks of hurricane memories by using free, online Photostory 3 software;
- Over 600 persons – mainly from disadvantaged families – benefitted from a hurricane-related educational community event with free food and enjoyable activities for children.

All of these folks gained additional knowledge about dealing with hurricanes. Many embraced new technical skills. A considerable number of participants also produced material – especially PSAs and videos – concerning hurricanes which can be shared with others for generations. In addition, the public-service announcements we produced are run during the hurricane season on Time Warner Cable and Southern Coastal Cable channels, in addition to local Channel 22, reaching thousands of residents in our county. Our hurricane interviews are available for checkout at every local library and are shown in season at our area's libraries and schools.

Our level of success has been considerable. As mentioned previously, we facilitated not only traditional methods like public lectures and workshops, but also offered inventive approaches like disaster game simulations, Web 2.0 communication techniques, oral-history video

interviews, digital storytelling and the creation of a digital collection of historic hurricane photographs. We brought all ages to the table, from child stars in hurricane-safety public-service announcements to nursing-home residents telling how they survived Hurricanes Hazel and Hugo.

We have succeeded in attaining these major objectives:

- Filming a digital video collection of 150 oral-history interviews on hurricanes;
- Scanning and creating a digital library of historic hurricane photographs and documents;
- Creating a series of ten televised public-service announcements about hurricane safety;
- Using digital game simulations on disasters to educate older kids and tweens on civil engineering and planning as they relate to disasters;
- Holding hurricane-related workshops to educate community members about mitigation, insurance issues, evacuation procedures, etc.;
- Employing Photostory3 to encourage families to participate in digital storytelling events on hurricanes;
- Teaching county staff to use Web 2.0 technologies to communicate information about hurricanes to web-savvy users;
- Planning and holding a county-wide Hurricane Hugo Commemoration Party, to bring hurricane information and awareness to residents of all ages while advertising the existence of the Georgetown County Hurricane Project;
- Fostering – in all of the above – a stronger working relationship with the larger county government and especially with the Emergency Management Department and the Georgetown County Library.

3. Applicable Results and Real World Practicality

While such an endeavor takes effort and dedication, it is certainly doable by many communities in the real world.

This endeavor was truly a team effort from the highest levels of government fashioning strategic plans to the smallest child participating happily in a public-service hurricane safety announcement! Here's a listing of the principle cast-of-characters by main functions:

A. Planning:
- The idea of applying for the award originated with the County Administrator;
- It was shepherded through County Council by the Chairman of that body;
- It was developed in its broadest strokes by the Public Library Director in concert with the Manager of the Emergency Management Department;
- It was enhanced by a group of advisors from the general populace;
- It was developed more precisely by the highly creative and energetic Hurricane Project Manager.

B. Implementation:
- The Coordinator of the Emergency Management Department provided names of many wonderful experts to serve as speakers and as additional project advisors;

- Other Public Library Managers – the Assistant Director, the Head of Adult and Children's Services, the Interactive Teen Gaming Manager, the Head of the Digital Library Project, etc. – offered advice and help to the Hurricane Project Manager;
- The South Carolina Emergency Management Division, the Red Cross, the YMCA, the hospital, the schools, and other agencies and nonprofits provided free materials and even food;
- The media – and especially our region's weather reporters – embraced the project fully and publicized it widely.

C. Content:
- The kids – along with myriad props and pets – were great in ten excellent public-service announcements that will be aired locally for years to come;
- The teens filmed scores of oral-history interviews resulting in 150 videos of hurricane experiences that will be viewed by folks and their descendants here assuredly for generations;
- The adults shared their memories of Hurricane Hugo – and in some cases, of Hurricane Hazel – and provided us with vivid reminders of the need to prepare for these fierce storms;
- The families enjoyed interactive experiences together: from an educational but enjoyable Hurricane party with over 600 attendees to family nights where folks used computer software online to create personal Hurricane Photo Albums based on digital photography.

It should be underscored again that once the money had been obtained, the plan had been detailed, and the project manager had been hired, _then_ county government had no real problems in the implementation of this project. Top county leadership mainly needed just to let a good project team get to work! And there was indeed quite a lot to do! The project's goals and objectives as noted were accomplished by melding creativity and innovation with a very close adherence to processes and timelines. This complex mix was further flavored by interactions with folks of all ages and backgrounds. It was a continually bubbling recipe for success! Residents were interviewed each week about their hurricane experiences. Children starred regularly in public-service announcements. Workshops were often held on everything from evacuation measures to sharing ones hurricane photos online. Disaster Nights, in which kids played an online game that tries to create a disaster-proof city, were mobbed continually with excited participants. Overall, the project exceeded well beyond our expectations in participants and in the quantity and quality of its programs and productions.

Much depended on our striving for good community involvement. Through effective outreach, we attained that goal: The community at large has been extremely supportive while presenting no complications to the accomplishments of our objectives. Here are just a few examples: the Red Cross donated prizes for Disaster Nights; the Cultural Council designed artwork for our PSAs; the YMCA gave us space and advertising for Hurricane Interviews; the Strand Theatre loaned their stage to shoot commercials; and the Lion's Club donated and served ice cream at several events.

When we hosted our Hurricane Hugo 20th Anniversary Community Day at East Bay Park, nearly two dozen exhibitors contributed their time and talents. By the event's end, more than 600

Georgetown County residents had enjoyed free food and entertainment and learned something about hurricane safety. Meteorological teams from three different television stations showed footage from past storms; the South Carolina Emergency Management Division offered pamphlets and personnel to answer questions; the Red Cross had displays on what you need to pack for evacuation; our own EMD had evacuation maps; local vendors explained everything from hurricane shutters to the latest 100-mph wind-rated screws; the local fire and police departments offered everything from child seat safety checks to fire truck rides; and even the donated food was served from disaster relief vehicles.

Shooting ten different public-service announcements with kids, dogs, giant props, sparklers, hard hats, and more was such an adventure! Everyone throughout the community availed us with filming sites: historic homes permitted us to do features on the value of storm shutters, and a local church enabled us to shoot two of our PSAs in Spanish, using the talented kids from the church's English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Folks from throughout the community offered pets for use in our "Pet Safety during Disasters" spot. We especially enjoyed shooting the PSA on "Children's Mental Health after Disasters." We worked with the gifted and talented program at Kensington Elementary School for this commercial, and combined the shoot with a two-week learning series that taught the kids about hurricanes, scripting, shooting, and acting. The youngsters even spent one class period playing the Stop Disasters online game, and most of them have since joined us for Disaster Nights at the library. All the PSAs run on for free on local cable channels ESPN, TNT, CNN, Discovery, Nickelodeon, Bravo and Channel 22 during the hurricane season. The kids still get a real kick out of seeing themselves on television, and parents and others get a timely reminder about hurricane preparedness.

According to the Hurricane/Disaster Preparedness and Response Website of Florida State University (http://hurricanes.ii.fsc.edu), public libraries mainly perform these principal roles during emergency situations: safe haven, disaster recovery center, communication hub, liaison, and evacuee resource. The website highlights the Beaufort County Library as having a disaster plan strong in those aspects. Also, according to the Director of the Florence County Library, that site has likewise strengthened its emergency-response abilities recently in preparing better to help its citizens to recover after a hurricane: lately, provision for generator hookup has been made at that system's headquarters library. Nevertheless, there currently exists no other program in South Carolina – and perhaps even nationally – that does anything approaching the exciting public informational work evidenced by the innovatively effective collaboration of the Georgetown County Emergency Management Department and the Georgetown County Library. In recognition of this fact, Georgetown County's Hurricane Project was highlighted as a special program at the South Carolina Emergency Management Association Workshop on March 23, 2010. Later, on April 27, 2010, the Georgetown County Emergency Manager and the Georgetown County Library Director gave together a keynote presentation at a statewide event in Columbia entitled "Community Disaster Response: The Role of Public Libraries." The program was hosted by the University of South Carolina, and it was attended by 72 persons representing almost equally the library community and the emergency management community. Reactions were very positive at that latter event as evidenced by these comments:

- "It's good to devise events like this to bring professionals from very different fields/agencies to think outside the box in stimulating ways."

- "Thank you for coordinating this meeting. It offered an opportunity to network and spark new interest and connections for disaster planning."
- "This is an excellent idea that needs to be taken to many areas of the state."

In August 2010, the South Carolina Association of Counties concurred with these sentiments by awarding the Georgetown County Hurricane Project with top honors for innovation for its county's population size. The International City County Management Association (ICMA) also then highlighted the project on its website and in its national publication.

4. Case Study Presentation

If selected, our case study presentation will include the following aspects:

- An 8-minute video highlighting our projects most significant achievements;
- A PowerPoint showcasing clearly the replicable action steps and real world practicality;
- A handout package detailing major points clearly with examples of project materials;
- A group discussion to encourage participants to react actively to the presentation and to introduce ideas of their own.

As samples, please see our attached, brief Hurricane Project Scrapbook; also, please visit YouTube to see our 8-minute video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiZ4IsTpwE0. Also, study our hurricane photographic collection online at our Georgetown County Digital Library: http://www.gcdigital.org/cdm4/browse.php?CISOROOT=%2Fp15077coll6 .

The imagination and creativity in our Hurricane Project had many facets and caused our innovative community endeavor to shine very brightly indeed for the ongoing benefit of all of our citizens in addressing a key local public-safety need through an innovative collaboration involving county government, the emergency management department, the public library, and our citizens. It is a valuable model that could prove quite beneficial as a pattern for counties throughout our coastal, southeastern region. For these reasons, team leaders of the Georgetown County Hurricane Project believe that they are indeed creating magic in a bold governmental manner and would like to share their results with others at the 2011 Transforming Local Government/FCCMA Conference.