



Leon County

Board of County Commissioners

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NEWS RELEASE

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Leon County Receives National Recognition as a Citizen-Engaged Community

*County selected as one of few communities throughout the country
for connecting with residents*

Leon County is one of only four communities throughout the country recognized for its one-on-one connection with citizens and has been deemed a Citizen Engaged Community by the Public Technology Institute (PTI) – one of the country’s only technology organizations created by and for cities/counties.

The Institute recently named Leon County as a 2012-2014 Citizen Engaged Community after County officials submitted an application for the specialized program. The program was established with the premise that local governments are challenged to provide “centralized citizen contact centers that effectively utilize new technology for fast, friendly and responsive service.”

The goal of such technology, according to PTI, is to empower citizens with direct interaction and a demonstration of performance.

“Leon County knows the importance of connecting with our citizens,” said Leon County Commission Chairman Akin Akinyemi. “We are honored to be recognized as a Citizen Engaged Community.”

Applicants were judged in three key areas including citizen participation processes, integrated communication channels/technology and performance reporting. PTI’s Citizen-Engaged Community Designation Program is established to challenge local government to achieve high standards in citizen participation and seamless service delivery.

“We are very pleased that our continuous efforts to stay engaged with our citizens has garnered us national recognition,” said Leon County Administrator Vincent S. Long. “Our ‘Citizens Connect’ website tool and mobile application are merely traits of a county-wide organizational culture of citizen engagement, service and responsiveness.”

Leon County Government was recognized earlier this year for its website’s transparency, which received the Sunny Award – a recognition presented by editors of the Sunshine Review to honor the most transparent government website. Leon County’s

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website was one of only a few counties to receive the award throughout the country.

Leon County's website features a "Citizens Connect" button that allows visitors to access online services, report or track a problem, make an inquiry online or choose to talk with a live person. The "Citizens Connect" button is prominently displayed allowing visitors to immediately view their options, which gives citizens the opportunity to see Leon County through a virtual front door.

The website also features a "Your Checkbook" feature, which is an online searchable database for actual county expenditures. Across the top of the website are drop down menus categorized in the County's "Core Four" areas of emphasis, which include: Demonstrating Performance and Results, Promoting Transparency, Accountability and Accessibility, Engaging Citizens and Partnering with our Community, and Ensuring Liveability and Sustainability. Each of the core four menu items contain useful information and are constantly updated.

In addition to the website, the Leon County Citizens Connect Mobile App was recently launched to bring County government to residents' fingertips. Within its initial days of operation, there were more than 600 online requests for the Mobile App. Thus far, the most frequently requested categories are general inquiries, mosquito control, animal issues, drainage problems, litter/junk and solid waste.

Leon County was also judged for the Virtual Town Hall meeting and the Citizen Engagement Series – other interactive events that have been scheduled to inform and fully engage residents.

The Virtual Town Hall Meeting was held in June and offered citizens the opportunity to participate by asking County Commissioners questions via an online forum. The Citizen Engagement Series has offered citizens the opportunity to gain insight into how decisions are made at the County level to set the priorities of the community and exchange input and ideas to meet present and future challenges. The series consists of six bi-monthly interactive sessions. Previous sessions have included Emergency Medical Services, Library Services and the Office of Management and Budget – which included an originally produced board game called "Let's Balance" where citizens were required to balance the budget. Future sessions for the Citizen Engagement Series feature Leon County Solid Waste Management and Tourism and Development.

PTI is recognized for identifying and developing leading practices for local government management. The Alexandria, Va.-based organization also recognizes local governments for technology innovation and success.

"All Leon County employees, including our information technology professionals, are filled with pride to know our work is resulting in meaningful engagement with our citizens," said Director of Leon County Management Information Services Pat Curtis.

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