

Inside:

Innovation Award winners
Conference highlights
... and more!



Managing risk by protecting reserves

Williamsburg takes top honors



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THE MAGAZINE OF THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

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ABOUT THE COVER

Congratulations to the City of Williamsburg for distinguishing itself by taking home both the Risk Management category and President's Award trophies in the 2022 VML Innovation Awards. How did they do it? Williamsburg did a great job not breaking the (piggy) bank during the pandemic! Learn more inside.

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2022 Annual Conference Photo Spread

Moments to remember from our time together in Richmond. Photographs by VML staff 21-25

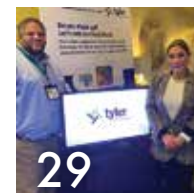
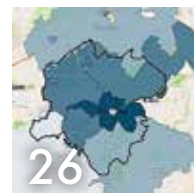
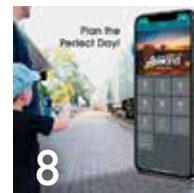
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Local Government Member Spotlight: City of Roanoke

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Community Business Member Spotlight: Tyler Technologies, Inc.

Tyler Technologies staff explain how Virginia's federated data approach benefits all localities. 28



Be Local. Be Bold...and Be Civil.

I WANT TO THANK EVERYONE who attended the VML Annual Conference in Richmond – I truly hope that you found someone or something that will prove helpful to you in your local government service! I thought that Clarence Anthony, NLC Executive Director did a great job of using our theme – Be Local Be Bold! Matt Lehrman then did a wonderful job of bringing civility into the conversation – demonstrating that being bold can be done with civility.

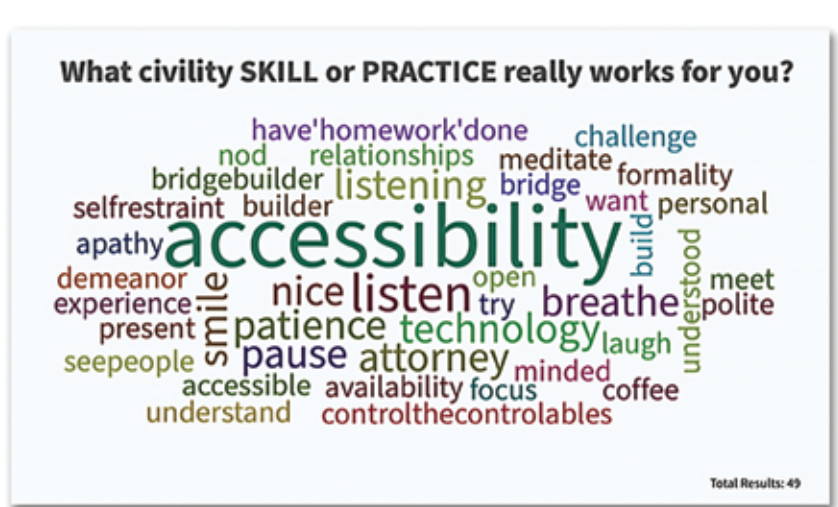
The word clouds that Matt generated based on attendee responses during his keynote address and session serve as great reminders of the things we should be keeping in mind as we navigate our lives. If you didn't have the chance before, I hope that you take the time to think about how the sentiments expressed in these words are reflected in your community.



Don't forget to adopt the civility pledge and send a copy to VML. You can view/download a copy of the pledge at www.vml.org/civility-respect-solutions.

As you heard from Former President Jon Stehle during the conference – the VML Board of Directors adopted this pledge and President Carson has made civility her mantra for the coming year. Thank you to the former Board of Directors and welcome to President Carson and the new Board!

Save these dates in early 2023: The Newly Elected Officials Conference will be held on January 4 in Richmond and Legislative Day is early this year on January 19. More details to come soon!



City of Alexandria has new personnel in communications and human resources: Fleming and Manuel

On September 6, **Ebony Fleming** began work as the City of Alexandria’s director of communications and public information.

Fleming’s early career started in broadcast news at WTKR NewsChannel 3 in Norfolk while earning a bachelor’s degree in Journalism from Norfolk State University.

After relocating to Houston, TX, and earning a master’s degree in Public Policy



- Fleming -

media relations.

Prior to joining the City of Alexandria, Fleming served as the director of communications for BakerRipley, the Houston region’s

from the University of Houston, she served as the public information officer with the Harris County District Attorney’s Office, leading the dissemination of community-focused communications through

largest social services nonprofit. During her tenure, she led strategic communications for the nationally recognized organization, including its launch of the COVID-19 rental assistance program.

In her new role, Fleming will oversee the development of the city’s strategic communications plan and expansion of the city’s Language Access Program.



- Manuel -


As of October 31, **Janet K. Manuel** is the City of Alexandria’s new chief human resources officer. Manuel served as the director of the Department of Human Resource and Civil Services & EEO/Diversity


and Inclusions Officer (CHRO) for the City of Pittsburgh, PA, which has over 3,500 employees. During her tenure, she focused on implementing processes, policies, and benefits which showcased the city as a place for all. This effort included creating an environment not only focused on the hiring of diverse candidates and implementing robust sourcing strategies, but also on creating benefits and policies which elevated the focus of diversity, equity, and inclusion, to make the workplace culture better for all.

In addition, Manuel led employment and training opportunities for city residents through the Pittsburgh Partnership in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services’ Employment and Retention Network (EARN).

Manuel has been recognized as a 2022 Top 100 HR Professional by the National Diversity Council. She is a past recipient of the Seven Seals Award by the U.S. Department of Defense for her leadership and initiative in support of the men and women who serve America in the National Guard and Reserve. She is also a past recipient of a Top 50 African American Women of Excellence for Greater Pittsburgh and the Most Powerful and Influential Women award from the Pennsylvania Diversity Council for Greater Pittsburgh.

Manuel holds a bachelor’s degree in Business from Cameron University and a master of science degree in Organizational Studies with a dual concentration in Leadership and Employee Relations from Robert Morris University. She also holds a SHRM-CP designation from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), and a PHR designation.





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PEOPLE

Winchester welcomes new police chief and director of community development: Behan and Ruddy

On October 21, **Amanda Behan** was sworn in as Winchester's new police chief.



- Behan -

Behan is the first female police chief in the department's 200-year history. Behan has been a dedicated member of the Winchester Police Department for over 20 years, climbing the ranks from recruit in 2001 to deputy chief in 2021.

"Amanda has been a part of the Winchester community and police department as a public servant, volunteer, mentor, change agent, role model, and leader. Her skills and qualifications are widely known, and she has my full faith and confidence in this new role of protecting the safety and wellbeing of our officers, staff, and city," stated City Manager Dan Hoffman in a press release announcing the selection.

The police chief vacancy was created when Chief John Piper was promoted to deputy city manager, overseeing all public safety divisions.

Behan has a master's degree in Executive Leadership from Liberty University, and throughout her career with the Winchester Police Department, has served many roles. Her accomplishments include implementing officer fitness standards, a significant expansion of community outreach activities, re-development of departmental policies, and acquisition of the department's first therapy canine.

On October 19, **Michael Ruddy** started as the City of Winchester's new community development director.



- Ruddy -

The community development director role is a reclassification of the former director of development services position and will be responsible for overseeing the city's Planning, Zoning, Inspections, Code Enforcement, and Housing divisions.

With this appointment, Ruddy's career of over 26 years is coming full circle since he began as an intern with the city's Planning Department in 1995. Since then, Ruddy has worked in the planning or zoning field with Frederick County (16 years), the Town of Purcellville (four years) and most recently,

the Town of Leesburg as the assistant zoning administrator.

"Mike not only brings a deep familiarity with our area, but also has a track record of delivering professional, high-quality service," said City Manager Hoffman in a press release. "We're very excited to have someone with his expertise in this critical role as we work toward achieving the city's strategic plan goals."

Ruddy holds a bachelor's degree in Parks and Recreation Management and a master's degree in Geography and Regional Planning.

Hopewell Councilmember honored as a Watershed Champion



- Gore -

Proving that elected officials can be the conduit of environmental change, Hopewell City Councilmember **Jasmine Gore** was recently honored as a Watershed Champion. Gore was recognized for her environmental stewardship as she

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was awarded the 2022 Virginia Watershed Champion Award during the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay's annual "Taste: Celebrate the Chesapeake" event. Affectionately referred to as "The Taste", this multi-region event brings together like-minded corporations and conservationists.

An Alliance press released cited Gore

as "an active proponent of environmental projects to improve quality of life for the residents of Hopewell. Her enthusiasm, knowledge, and passion shine through in all she does. We appreciate Jasmine's commitment to the Chesapeake Bay and helping advance the leadership of local government capacity in this space."

In Memoriam: Former Wytheville Town Manager Curtis Wayne Sutherland, Jr.



Curtis Wayne Sutherland, Jr., retired town manager and life-long resident of Wytheville, passed away on Sunday, October 9, 2022.

Sutherland was born October 31, 1951 to Curtis Sutherland and Margaret Myers of Wytheville. He graduated from Virginia Tech in 1975 with a degree in Civil Engineering. Following graduation, he accepted a position at Wytheville Community College as an instructor in civil engineering technology. In 1980, Wytheville hired Sutherland as an assistant manager. Four years later, he was promoted to town manager in which position he served Wytheville for 36 years until his retirement in 2020.

Under his leadership, the town has blossomed with green spaces, hiking trails, parks, ball fields and recreation areas. His list of projects is extensive and includes the wellness center/meeting center, Withers Park, the McWane pool, the Crystal Springs Recreation Area, and his first park project, the Elizabeth Brown Memorial Park, one of his favorite spots. The civil engineer in Sutherland was always mindful of the town's infrastructure and oversaw projects that greatly improved services offered by the town, like water and wastewater treatment plant expansions, sewer projects, the Downtown Wytheville Improvement Project, East Main Street improvements and more.

Sutherland was a devoted husband and father. He enjoyed serving his community as town manager, watching his hometown flourish, cheering on the Hokies and spending summer days on Claytor Lake.

Those who wish to honor Sutherland can donate to the Wayne Sutherland Memorial Fund with the Town of Wytheville. Checks can be mailed to the Town of Wytheville, P.O. Box 533, Wytheville, VA 24382, attention Treasurer's Office. Please note the Memorial Fund in the memo section. Online condolences can be sent to the family at www.grubbfuneralhome.com.

In Memoriam: Former Luray Mayor Barry Presgraves



Mayor **Barry Presgraves** served as a member of the Town of Luray Council from July 2004 until June 2008, and then as mayor from July 2008 until December 2020. He was born on April 3, 1943, in Luray and was a son of the late Ronald T. Presgraves and Beatrice Seal Presgraves.

Mayor Presgraves' service to Luray included celebration of the Town's Bicentennial in 2012, construction of the new Laurel Ridge Community College campus, expansion of the Hawksbill Greenway, and replacement of the West Main Street Bridge.

He worked as Director of Concession Operations for 31 years for ARA VA Skyline Company. He was a past deacon at Beahm's Chapel Church, was a Sunday school teacher, served on the Board of Directors for Page Memorial Hospital and was a member of the Page County Planning Commission. He was also a member of the Rileyville Baptist Church for 30 years.

Roanoke County personnel updates: Spickler, Blanton, and Baker



- Spickler -

Roanoke County recently welcomed **Kaelyn Spickler** as the public information specialist in the Public Information Office. In her role, Spickler will work to expand the county's footprint through new and current social media platforms as well as experiment with video blogs. She will bring a fresh perspective to the marketing of the county and be a force behind special projects.

Spickler holds a bachelor's degree in Communication Studies from Roanoke College. She previously worked for the City of Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority as the manager of public relations, marketing, and social media.



- Blanton -

On September 19, **Jim Blanton** began his duties as Roanoke County's new director of libraries. Blanton follows Shari Henry who served as director for nearly five years.

Blanton comes to Roanoke County from Buncombe County Public Libraries in Asheville, NC where he had served as library director since 2018. Prior to his role in Asheville, Blanton served for 20 years in various roles within libraries in Virginia and Kentucky. Blanton brings experience in expanding library programs and services, developing community partnerships, library construction projects, and multi-year budgeting.

Blanton holds a master's degree in Public Administration from Old Dominion University, a master's of science in Library Science from the University of Kentucky, and a bachelor of arts in Philosophy from the University of Kentucky.



- Baker -

As of October 24, **Megan Baker** is Roanoke County's director of economic development. Baker follows Jill Loope who announced her retirement in July.

Baker comes to Roanoke County from Peachtree City, GA where she served as president of the Fayette County Development Authority (FCDA). She led the business attraction and retention programs for Fayette

County and spearheaded development of a 600-acre business park.

Prior to her role with the FCDA, Baker was policy director at the Georgia Chamber of Commerce where she led economic and demographic research and analysis for Georgia 2030, the Chamber's strategic initiative. Additional experience includes strategic and budget planning roles at Clayton State University, the Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, and the Indiana Department of Workforce Development. Baker brings extensive experience in busi-

ness attraction and retention; marketing; and budget, policy, and data analysis.

Baker is a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) through the International Economic Development Council, a standard of excellence in the profession, and has served as a board member of the Georgia Economic Developers Association. She holds a B.S. in Chemical Engineering from North Carolina State University and a master's degree in Public Affairs from Indiana University. She is also a graduate of the University of Oklahoma Economic Development Institute.

Movers and shakers

Do you know someone who's on the move? Send your announcements about new hires in local government, promotions, retirements, awards and honors to Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org.

In Memoriam: Emporia Councilmember and former VML President Woody Harris

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL, and the Virginia Municipal League in particular, lost a valuable member of its family when Woody Harris unexpectedly passed away on September 9 in Emporia.

Harris was first elected to the City Council in Emporia in 1988. During the ensuing 34 years, he served as vice mayor for the city and on many local boards and commissions. His influence and leadership went well beyond the confines of his city, however. Governors of both parties appointed him to state boards; including the State Executive Council (SEC), which consists of state agency directors, judges, private providers, legislators, parents, and children's advocates and which oversees state and local administration of the Children's Services Act (CSA). He also served in leadership positions with the Crater Planning District Commission and the Southside Regional Jail Authority.

Harris ran for the Republican nomination for U.S. Congress to represent the state's 4th congressional district and he was a Republican elector in the presidential election of 2004.

Harris was a long-time employee of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice. He began his work with that agency as a juvenile probation officer in 1979 and was the director of the 6th District Court Service Unit at the time of his death. His expertise in juvenile justice issues led him to serve on more than one Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT) in his region. This work made him uniquely

qualified for his appointment to the State Executive Council.

Outside of his professional and political life, Harris made time to pursue other interests. A long-time and skilled chess player, he was the U.S. Chess Secretary from 1984-1987 (the Secretary is a member of and is elected by the U.S. Chess Federation's Executive Board). Harris also was a theater enthusiast and had been inducted into the national theater honorary society. He was a graduate of Greensville County High School and the University of Richmond, where he completed his bachelor's degree, with a double major in Political Science and Sociology. An article about Harris in the December 2001 issue of *Virginia Town & City* does a great job of conveying more about him. It is posted at bit.ly/3shjDHm.



Harris began serving on VML's Executive Committee in 1994, when he was elected as chair of the City Section. In 1996, he was elected to an at-large seat on the Executive Committee and subsequently elected as VML president for 2001-2002. He stayed active with VML following his service on the Executive Committee, participating in committees, and

speaking at conferences.

Joni S. Terry, VML's longest-serving staff member, summed it up well: "Woody was always very kind, helpful and respectful."

Woody is survived by his wife, Carla.

The full obituary is available at www.owenfh.com/obituary/f-woodrow-harris.

Newport News begins work on James River Strand in the Yard District

RESIDENTS AND GUESTS IN NEWPORT NEWS will soon have another reason to visit the newly established Yard District, as the city is undertaking a project to offer connections to the downtown waterfront. Work has begun on the James River Strand Project, which includes improvements to Christopher Newport Park, a multi-use connection to Victory Landing Park, and amenities that offer one-of-a-kind experiences.

A significant portion of the project includes a multi-use walkway connection from 28th Street and Christopher Newport Park to Victory Landing Park. This will allow guests closer access to the James River. Plans also include an outdoor amphitheater, with terraced lawn seating, hardscape areas, lighting, and electricity to support small-scale performances and special events.

“The James River Strand Project will transform the downtown waterfront in Newport News,” said Newport News Mayor McKinley L. Price in a press release. “Residents and visitors will soon be able to enjoy unique entertainment while taking in the most spectacular views in Hampton Roads. Additional park enhancements will help guests of all ages connect with nature and create lasting memories in our great city.”

This project is part of the city’s Downtown Reimagined Plan, which leverages the downtown and waterfront areas to create a vibrant, walkable community for all to dine, visit, move, and invest. The James River Strand Project is the first component of this multi-faceted plan.

For more information, visit www.newportnewsva.com/downtown-reimagined-2.



Alexandria establishes office of climate action

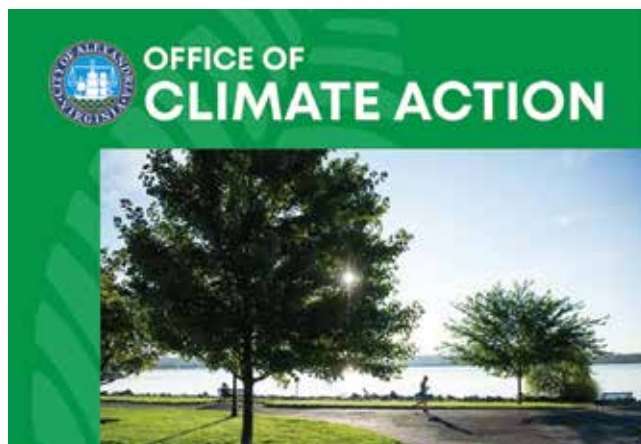
The City of Alexandria has created an Office of Climate Action that will lead efforts in a variety of areas such as energy efficiency, high performance buildings, renewable energy, climate change

mitigation and reporting, electric mobility, business assistance, community engagement, and advocacy

The city is recruiting a Climate Action Officer to partner with residents, businesses, non – profits and governmental agencies to meet shared climate, sustainability, and energy objectives. To herald this critical work, a Public Affairs and Engagement Specialist will also be recruited to undertake community-focused implementation, education, and outreach programs.

Alexandria was the first locality in Virginia to adopt an Eco-City Charter in 2008. In 2011, the city council passed the Energy and Climate Change Action Plan (ECCAP) to promote actions towards reducing the Alexandria community’s operational greenhouse gas emissions. In 2019, the city declared a Climate Emergency and adopted its Environmental Action Plan (EAP) 2040 which established a target of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 50% by 2030, and 80-100% by 2050.

Additional information is available at www.alexandriava.gov/Eco-City.



Town of Ashland welcomes next generation of visitors with new visitor website & mobile planning widget

PLANNING THE PERFECT DAY or weekend in Ashland just got much easier! The Town of Ashland’s Community Engagement Department is excited to unveil the town’s new VisitAshlandVA website (www.visitashlandva.com) and AshlandVA Widget (www.visitashlandva.visitwidget.com) with integrated mobile apps – an interactive way to map out everything to see, do, eat, and drink in the Ashland area.

“No more fussing with bulky maps or checking five different event websites to figure out what’s going on in Ashland,” said Martha J. Miller, Community Engagement Manager for the Town of Ashland in a press release. “Whether you live or work here, or are visiting us, we designed the new site and app to act as your all-access digital passport to the Center of the Universe.”

Designed by Visit Widget and funded in part by a grant from



Virginia Tourism Corporation, the new site and planning tool provides a new way to explore what the Ashland area has to offer, including hotels, popular restaurants, activities, shopping, and more. And coming soon, interactive walking tours of Ashland’s historic neighborhoods and seasonal scavenger hunt challenges!

“The tourism economy in Ashland is poised for immense growth in the next five to ten years, especially with the arrival of the Fall Line Trail and Mid-Atlantic Railroad Park,” Miller added. “We are grateful to Virginia Tourism Corporation for their support, which has been instrumental in helping us prepare for and meet the needs of the next generation of visitors.”

Online trail guide coming to the Harrisonburg region



HIKERS AND MOUNTAIN BIKERS visiting the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County will soon have a fantastic new online trail guide featuring 15 different area trails and trail systems. The city and county partnered to develop the site using a \$10,000 grant from the Virginia Tourism Corporation.

The site will include helpful information such as distance, elevation, ability level, available parking, and amenities like freshwater or restroom facilities. The city’s tourism department is asking users to provide feedback for future updates to the site.

The Harrisonburg region is an increasingly popular destination for hiking, biking, fishing, camping, and outdoor recreation.

Staunton holds “Wheels for Wilson” Bike-A-Thon

ON OCTOBER 22, the City of Staunton held the inaugural “Wheels for Wilson” Bike-A-Thon in the city’s Gypsy Hill Park. Bikers rode laps around the park to raise money for the Rita S. Wilson Scholarship Award, which provides students educational scholarships to chase their dreams and create opportunities.

Rita Wilson was the first Black council woman in Staunton. She served from 1991-2008 including two years as Vice Mayor. In November 2020, the City Council officially designated council chambers as the Rita S. Wilson Council Chambers.

Wilson served on VML’s Legislative Committee and is a former chair of its Human Development and Education Committee.

Additional information is available at <https://bit.ly/3g41KsV>.



Annual Adventure Race returns to Williamsburg

THE 8TH ANNUAL GREAT Williamsburg Adventure Race held during the afternoon of September 25 featured over a dozen local businesses and organizations in a multi-day adventure race throughout the City of Williamsburg.

Teams of two or four players completed a series of challenges and puzzles inspired by the city’s culture, history, and businesses. Players solved riddles, decoded clues, and took on a wide variety of interactive challenges to win prize packs of gifts donated by local businesses.

After two years as a modified multi-day event, the 2022 Great Williamsburg Adventure Race returned to its original format: a one afternoon, three-hour competition throughout downtown Williamsburg.

“We’re so excited to have a one-day

event again,” said race producer Adam Stackhouse ahead of the event. “We have some new twists to keep returning teams on their toes.”

Following the race, an awards ceremony was held at the Crim Dell Meadow where puzzle answers were revealed, and the winners were announced.

The adventure race, billed as the city’s signature annual town-gown event, is produced by AVAdventure Productions with support from the City of Williamsburg.

Tickets were required for all participants with free registration for teams consisting of current William & Mary students. For more information visit www.williamsburgadventurerace.com.



SEPTEMBER 25, 2022 2-5PM

Fredericksburg launches sustainability website

RECENTLY, THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG announced the launch of its Environmental Sustainability Program’s website. By connecting the community with resources and programs that are available, accessible, and affordable, the city’s Environmental Sustainability Program aims to support individual action to reduce the impacts of climate change and to help the community thrive.

In 2019, city council passed the 100% Renewable Energy Resolution, which committed the City of Fredericksburg to have 100% renewable energy power municipal operations by 2035.

The Environmental Sustainability Program is dedicated to environmental compliance, public education, pollution prevention, and environmental sustainability and stewardship.

What Is “Sustainability”?

Sustainability is defined as a process or a state that can be maintained at a certain level indefinitely. In other words, it means meeting the present’s needs without compromising future generations’ ability to meet their own needs.

A sustainable community means to working together to create an attractive, clean area in which to live and to protect the natural resources upon which all life is dependent – for example, using energy and water more efficiently, managing our waste through recycling and composting, producing less waste, and reducing pollution.

For more information, visit www.fredericksburgva.gov/green.



Welcome to VML’s new Allied Member - The Northern Virginia Regional Commission



THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA REGIONAL Commission (NVRC) is a regional council of thirteen member local governments in the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington DC. NVRC is a political subdivision (a government agency) within the Commonwealth. With a rich history spanning 60 years, NVRC’s chief roles and functions have focused on providing information, performing professional and technical services for its members, and serving as a mechanism for regional coordination. Current programs and projects address a wide array of local government interests.

Announcing the winners of the 2022 VML Innovation Awards

THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE (VML) is pleased to announce the winners of its annual awards for excellence in local government. The statewide competition recognizes innovative problem-solving, excellence in management, citizen participation, and improved services to citizens.

VML received nearly 80 entries, from which judges selected one winner in each of eight categories. One of the category winners was chosen by 2021-2022 VML President and City of Fairfax Councilmember Jon Stehle to receive the President's Award. The winners were presented with their awards at VML's 2022 Annual Conference during the Awards Reception the evening of October 3 at the Downtown Marriott in Richmond.

Thanks to everyone who submitted and congratulations to all the winners!

The 2022 winners are:

Risk Management & President's Award – City of Williamsburg

Community Health Award – Town of Blacksburg

Economic Development Award – Town of Marion

Public Safety Award – City of Newport News

Working with Youth Award – City of Newport News

Environmental Quality Award – Town of Warsaw

Communications Award – City of Virginia Beach

Local Champion Award – City of Roanoke



Visit www.vml.org/innovation-awards to view videos submitted by the winners.

WILLIAMSBURG

RISK MANAGEMENT & PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR INNOVATION

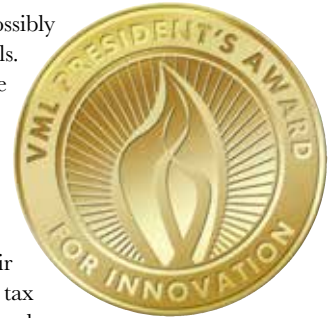


Reserve Protection

THE CITY OF WILLIAMSBURG maintains an extremely high policy threshold for reserve funds, requiring an equivalent of 35% of the prior year's revenues to be held in an operating reserve. When COVID-19 hit, the risk of outside circumstances severely affecting the City of Williamsburg's tourism-based economy became a reality. However, city staff recognized early that a pandemic is longer term than a typical emergency scenario and requires a different management strategy. So, instead of using reserve funds, the city dedicated

any additional funds that could possibly be used to make up for the shortfalls.

This strategy has allowed the city to tap into the reserves occasionally without dipping below the 35% threshold. By budgeting conservatively and maintaining a healthy reserve, the city was able to offer residents a return on their investment in the form of reduced tax burdens — and implement a revised pay plan that increased staff salaries.



What the judges said:

The proof is in the numbers, and the City of Williamsburg did a fantastic job proving they could manage risk during one of the riskiest financial periods in recent memory. The city's fiscal discipline and foresight is commendable.



(L-R) VRSA Members' Supervisory Chair and Town of Ashland Manager Josh Farrar, City Manager Andrew Trivette, Director of Finance Barbara Dameron, and VML President Jon Stehle.

BLACKSBURG

COMMUNITY HEALTH AWARD



Aging in Place Planning Resources

BLACKSBURG IS COMMITTED to meeting the needs of its older residents. The Aging in Community (AiC) Leadership Team brings together local government staff with community advocates, regional planners, aging experts, health & social service agencies, non-profits, and the philanthropic sector. Since its inception, five senior staff from the Town of Blacksburg have served on the AiC Team and have taken the lead in developing the suite of Aging in Place planning resources including a workbook and facilitated workshops that enable group discussion and collaborative learning.

What the judges said:

Particularly commendable is how Blacksburg sought to build not only resources but a culture of supporting older adults holistically within its professional staff and partner institutions through the “Train the Trainer” series.



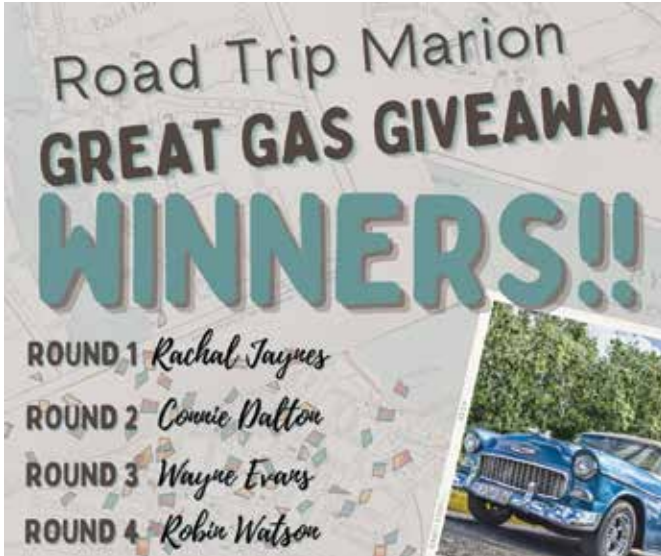
(L-R) Town Clerk Lorraine Spaulding, Vice Mayor Susan Anderson, Town Manager Marc Verniel, Mayor Leslie Hager Smith, and Councilmember Michael Sutphin.

MARION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARD



“Road Trip Marion” Great Gas Giveaway!



DURING THE SUMMER of high gas prices, residents and visitors to Marion were encouraged to stop by participating businesses and sign up to win a \$100 gas card. Participants could register each week at every business. A winner was drawn each Tuesday and announced each Wednesday on local media and the town’s social media accounts starting Memorial Day week through Labor Day week. This popular promotion not only brought media and public attention all summer but provided Marion businesses with a huge database of potential customers – at ZERO COST TO THE TOWN!

What the judges said:

This simple but productive marketing campaign was good teaming of business and government resources. It had a clear goal to support/increase the local economy, overcoming impediments of high fuel costs and tight budgets and made it happen.



(L-R) Chief of Police John Clair, Councilmember Larry Carter, Mayor David Helms, Councilmember Bill Weaver and Town Manager Bill Rush.

NEWPORT NEWS

PUBLIC SAFETY AWARD



Community Assistance Response (CARE) Program

THE COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE RESPONSE (CARE) program is the result of a partnership between the Newport News Fire Department, the Newport News Police Department, and the Hampton-Newport News Community Services Board. Members of the CARE team provide initial support for those experiencing mental or behavioral health issues within Newport News. Crisis Intervention Teams like the CARE program are advanced, community-based approaches to improve the outcomes of these encounters.

What the judges said:

A great program that demonstrates compassion and consideration for both the individuals experiencing mental health episodes and those who seek to assist them.



NEWPORT NEWS

WORKING WITH YOUTH AWARD



YouthBuild Program

OVER THE PAST YEAR, Newport News YouthBuild has developed into a dynamic program by making significant enhancements, from new partnerships with the business community to additional credentialing programs for young people. YouthBuild has also enhanced its volunteer program, giving program participants additional

opportunities to receive hands-on training in construction and other in-demand industries, including carpentry, maintenance and pre-apprenticeships in plumbing, heating ventilation and air conditioning, and electrical services.



What the judges said:

A wonderful program that shows how a locality can build on an initial success to create a truly transformative experience for young people. The trifecta of city, business and volunteer resources means that participants are supported throughout and can really feel invested in creating their own future.



(L-R) Project Manager Lisa Wornom-Zahraddin, Councilwoman Sharon P. Scott, Lt. Andre Dorsey of the Newport News Fire Department, Intergovernmental Affairs Manager Jerri Wilson, and Executive Director of Newport News YouthBuild Daniel Carrera.



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WARSAW

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AWARD



The Bounds Redevelopment Project

AFTER PUBLIC INPUT SESSIONS and legal battles, the Town of Warsaw acquired a 11.4-acre downtown property with an abandoned shopping mall. After demolishing the structure, the town created a new stormwater system along Main Street and the downtown corridor, funneling the water to a beautiful 2-acre pond. The remaining areas of the property became walking trails, parking, decorative acorn lighting, signage, and an observation deck overlooking a local creek all linked to an existing trail system, adding miles of trails in town limits. This project provided a solution to stormwater flooding, cleaned local waterways, added much needed greenspace and public amenities, as well as provided regional attractions the town.

What the judges said:

Turning an unproductive eyesore in an attractive community amenity is a good thing! Being able to incorporate community partnerships and available grant entities to pretty much fund the whole project is a great win.



(L-R) Town Manager Joseph Quesenberry, Mayor Randall Phelps, Assistant Town Manager Missy Coates, and Clerk of Council Julia Blackley-Rice.

VIRGINIA BEACH

COMMUNICATIONS AWARD



The Ripple Effect: Navigating an Approach to Coastal Resilience

THE CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH developed a comprehensive Flood Protection Program to address its most critical needs. However, the required funding to complete these “Phase I” programs far exceeded the amount the city council could authorize on its own. In June 2021, the city council decided to put the Flood Protection Program bond referendum on the next general election ballot.

The city’s communication team leveraged a considerable bank of existing visual assets, to include photography, video, audio, and graphics created by its multimedia services department. As part of the citizen participation and community engagement effort, the City of Virginia Beach held more than 26 virtual and in-person meetings. These events were designed to present the facts about flooding issues locally, talk about the benefits of the Flood Protection Program, and the risks associated with inaction.

What the judges said:

Ultimately, the dramatic turnaround in public opinion speaks volumes about the efficacy of this communications project. The Flood Protection Program is clearly an incredibly high-stakes project for the future of Virginia Beach and this campaign effectively communicated the importance and complexity of the issue and necessary infrastructure in an engaging way.



Director of Legislative Affairs Debra Bryan.

ROANOKE

LOCAL CHAMPION AWARD



Star City Safe Program

THE STAR CITY SAFE PROGRAM was developed to help reduce youth violence by Director of General Services Jeffrey Powell on his own initiative. It involves staff from various city departments – all under the leadership of Powell whose “day job” focuses on managing fleet, solid waste, purchasing, risk management and facilities. The Star City Safe initiative focuses on youth, ensuring they have a safe

and supportive environment in which to prosper, thereby lessening the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors that could lead to being the victim or perpetrator of violence. The initiative includes extended supervised hours at library branches and recreation centers, movie and sports nights, mentoring services, job training and apprenticeships, conflict management training, and more.



Jeffrey Powell – City of Roanoke

What the judges said:

It's almost impossible to choose a winner in this category because there are so many inspiring people doing amazing work in local governments across Virginia. Mr. Powell is this year's winner not only because of his willingness to work outside his regular duties, but his obvious compassion for the residents of his city. Well done sir!



(L-R) Council Members Joseph L. Cobb, Stephanie Moon Reynolds, Sherman P. Lea, Sr., Patricia White-Boyd, and Vivian Sanchez-Jones.



Conference Highlights

VML's 2022 Annual Conference was attended by some of the best looking, most congenial, and sharpest dressed local government folks and organization representatives from across Virginia. But you don't have to take our word for it. We've got the photos to prove it! Thanks to everyone who attended!



Conference Highlights





Conference Highlights





CITY OF ROANOKE

By Bob Cowell

Climbing the stepping-stones to economic success in the Star City

Note – this article originally published October 4, 2022, in the *National League of Cities’ online Resources collection*. It is reprinted here with permission.

PRIOR TO THE COVID-19 pandemic, more than half of the total households in the City of Roanoke were already struggling to make ends meet. This included the number of households below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and households who are considered ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed). ALICE households earn more than those considered in poverty and, while working, are unable to afford necessities like housing, childcare, food, healthcare, and transportation. Strikingly, the percentage of ALICE Households is significant across the City of Roanoke, ranging from 25%-40% in all zip codes within the city limits.

With this as the backdrop, the economic repercussions of COVID were widespread and disproportionate in their impact. Loss of income from reduced hours or lost jobs, inability to afford food, falling behind on bills, anxiety, and depression, lack of childcare, and the added burden of virtual learning and homeschooling, created an avalanche of challenges spotlighting the vulnerability of this hidden segment of the population. It was a sobering reality check prompting the realization by city leadership that facilitating recovery and rebuilding for these families would require an aggressive and radically different approach than providing typical support services.

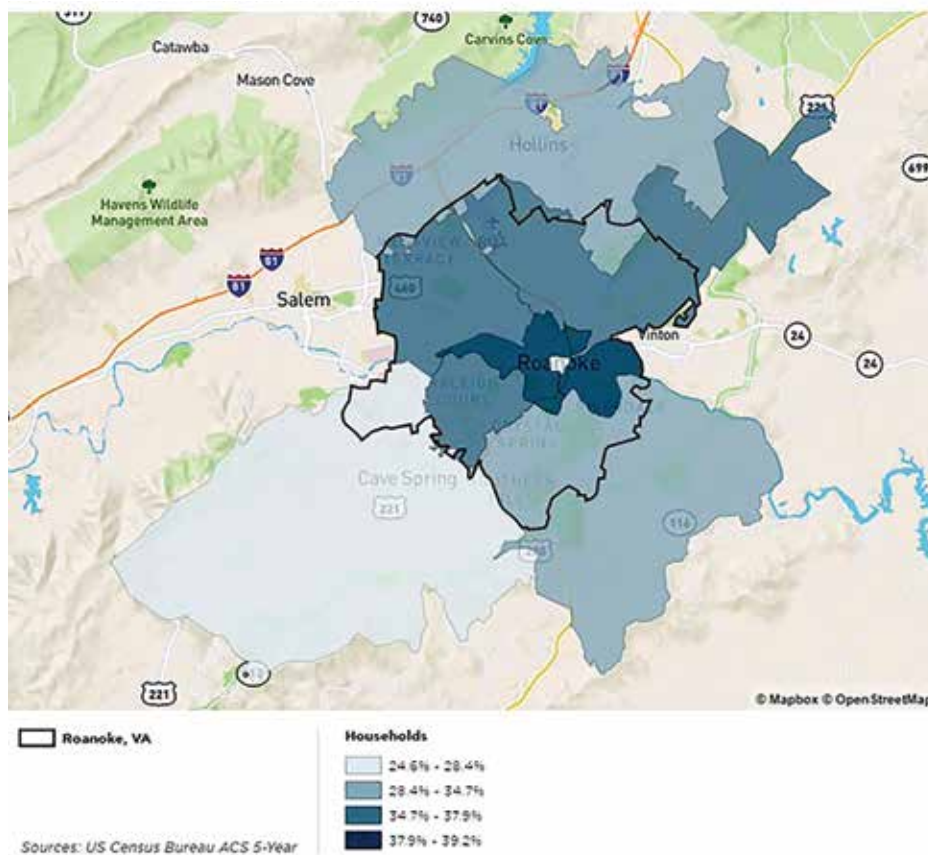
Luckily, with the pandemic came a series of federal government funds that allowed for the exploration of innovative solutions. Starting with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding, the City of Roanoke prioritized funding with input from its local citizens, and along with its nonprofit partners expanded eligibility to allow those below the ALICE threshold to access much-needed support. When it came time to invest its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, the city again called on the wisdom of its citizens and partners to identify long-term recovery and resiliency strategies. Among its resiliency investments, \$3 million was earmarked for a workforce/skills development pathways initiative – an initiative intended to identify the needs of employers in high-growth, high-potential sectors, and gaps that may exist in the local workforce and align development and training programs for youth, unemployed and underemployed. Also, in the midst of the pandemic, the City of Roanoke

successfully launched the Roanoke Financial Empowerment Center providing no-cost, one-on-one financial counseling from trained professionals.

Enter the National League of Cities’ Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (EEMI). Through NLC’s EEMI grant, the City of Roanoke was given the opportunity to better understand the needs of the population most impacted by the pandemic and begin to explore their receptiveness to an employer-driven career pathways initiative. Towards the end of 2021, the EEMI powered a survey that sought to identify challenges to household economic stability. This research was built on a previous COVID impact survey conducted by United Way of Roanoke Valley in Spring 2021. 86% of survey respondents represented those in poverty (44%) and ALICE (42%).

The survey showed that ALICE respondents were primarily working in healthcare, food service, and retail trade. Opportunities for advancement within these essential fields could help ALICE workers achieve economic stability. ALICE respondents were largely motivated to secure improved employment and take on greater responsibility at work. Some wanted to shift to professional, business, and IT jobs.

Percentage of ALICE Households



Resources

- Visit the Roanoke Financial Empowerment Center at www.freedomfirstenterprises.com/roanokefec.
- Learn more about the National League of Cities' Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (EEMI) at www.nlc.org/initiative/equitable-economic-mobility-initiative.

However, ALICE workers need more training, continued education, and skill development to secure such employment opportunities. Because ALICE households struggled to pay for basic expenses during COVID-19, local to federal programs should continue to offer supplemental assistance and emergency financial support inclusive of this group.

These findings, as well as ALICE data visualized through mySidewalk and discussions with NLC staff, guided the development of an employment pilot cohort that would not just receive traditional employment, training in targeted industries, awareness, and knowledge of employment opportunities in the city's Innovation Corridor (think healthcare, biomedicine, and life sciences), but also supplemental assistance for things like food, rent, childcare, transportation, uniforms/tools, etc.

With the City of Roanoke engaging the Greater Roanoke Workforce Development Board in its \$3 million workforce investment in an effort dubbed Star City Works, EEMI plans evolved to better leverage both funding sources and other assets already available through this partnering entity. Since the Star City Works program design aligned and had similar elements as the intended EEMI pilot, further conversations showed that the biggest opportunity for EEMI funds was to use them to complement both federal workforce development funding and City of Roanoke ARPA funds. EEMI funds would be used to blend and braid these funding streams and fill in the gaps to create a more seamless system. Thus, a new, strengthened workforce development effort was formed connecting the pipeline of interest to these high-demand industry jobs, and the ability to deliver employer-

ready workers. This more robust approach includes outreach and awareness-building in targeted neighborhoods whose residents were most disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

So where do we go from here?

Star City Works launched in August and just completed its first hiring event. Career Quest, an annual career fair for youth with a focus on high-tech, high-demand jobs, ran at the end of September with 30 employers across the region providing interactive displays of their respective fields. Roanoke City Public School students have increased opportunities to participate in this experience thanks to transportation support and outreach efforts. Additional opportunities to align with employers already planning to create career pathways internally are being explored. Partnerships with local nonprofits including those providing basic needs, health and mental health services, and childcare are actively being pursued to remove the most critical barriers to successful training completion and employment retention.

All due credit

Things are certainly shining a little brighter in the Star City these days, and the stepping-stones on the pathway towards economic mobility are finally being put in place. The City of Roanoke would like to acknowledge the following people for working to make all this possible:

- Abby Hamilton, Executive Director United Way of Roanoke Valley
- Morgan Romeo, Executive Director, Greater Roanoke Workforce Development Board
- Brandon Meginley, Financial Stability Specialist, City of Roanoke

About the author: *Bob Cowell is the city manager for Roanoke.*

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TYLER TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

By Tyler Technologies Staff

Virginia’s federated data approach benefits all localities

IN RECENT YEARS, it has become increasingly common for public entities to use data to address emerging issues. Public entities in localities of all sizes have found that access to accurate, timely information drives successful policies, makes operations more efficient, and allows for smarter allocation of resources. Taking these benefits to the next level means adopting a federated data approach.

What is federated data?

In politics, a federation unites smaller, more localized entities. In the context of information sharing, federation means aggregating data from multiple sources, allowing a variety of consumers to access it in actionable ways. Because data’s value increases with its accessibility, data sharing across departments, jurisdictions, and geography gives otherwise autonomous or siloed agencies the ability to share insights to achieve mutually beneficial solutions.

The Commonwealth of Virginia provides an exciting example of the possibilities that exist with a federated approach to data. Virginia’s innovation in this area allows local governments to enhance resident services by leveraging data from – and sharing foundational technology platforms with – the Commonwealth.

A FedRAMP-certified, cloud-enabled enterprise data platform (such as is used in the following examples) encourages internal data sharing for every type of government initiative, policy, or decision. In doing so, it facilitates financial, performance, and operational management and reporting.



City of Norfolk: Data Portal

City of Norfolk residents can access valuable local information from the larger Virginia Open Data Portal (www.data.virginia.gov). The Commonwealth’s portal offers federated domains including www.data.norfolk.gov. This site includes datasets relevant to Norfolk residents such as:

- All business licenses issued monthly by the Commissioner of Revenue
- Crime mapping, which allows the public to query and map crimes and incidents within specific geographic borders
- City employee demographics
- STORM (System to Track, Organize, Record, and Map) data captured by city residents and staff during and after inclement weather events
- Animal care and adoption

Other popular datasets include real estate and tax information as well as data around adoptions, library circulation, neighborhood quality code enforcement, and city fleet vehicles and operations.

However, the City of Norfolk’s data doesn’t just satisfy curiosity. As noted on the site, it can also “spark innovation, encourage community collaboration, improve transparency, and assist with data-informed decision-making.” To this end, the site includes “Data Stories” (www.data.norfolk.gov/stories) which further simplify and explain the information using accessible narratives, pictures, and visualizations such as charts and maps.

Town of Dumfries: COVID-19 Response Tracker

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, local leaders in Town of Dumfries (population under 5,000) wanted to enjoy the benefits of a data driven approach that would make the town’s operations as effective as their larger counterparts. Dumfries creatively leveraged federated data – in this case, Virginia’s existing investment in an enterprise data platform – in ways that saved local staff time and resources while also delivering essential information to town residents.

The Town of Dumfries created a COVID-19 Response Tracker with automated data ingress from the Commonwealth as well as Johns Hopkins University. This secure automation from original, accurate sources ensured that all the town’s data was reliable and up to date. By using information already being gathered by the Commonwealth and filtering the aggregated data down to a county level, Dumfries’ staff and residents benefitted from access to critical public health information. It’s important to emphasize that the town was able to accomplish this goal without adding staff, infrastructure, or data responsibility.

The Dumfries COVID-19 Response Tracker – accessible via www.data.dumfriesva.gov – continues to provide important recovery measures such as daily changes in case counts and vaccination rates by demographic.

DRPT: Rail and public transportation information

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) is also joining the data federation movement in Virginia. The DRPT streamlined its Six-Year Improvement Plan by implementing the same enterprise data platform used by the Commonwealth’s Office of Data Governance and Analytics. The result: DRPT’s Six-Year Improvement Plan is no longer simply a collection of PDFs. The plan is now a live, interactive document that gives the public access to a wealth of information about where transit money is allocated. Beyond transparency, this federated data approach frees up staff who might otherwise be handling time-consuming information requests. Partner organizations, too, can easily filter down to see details on their areas of funding.



Tyler's Data & Insights team – pictured here with outgoing VML President and City of Fairfax Councilmember Jon Stehle – was thrilled to share these data-driven stories at this year's VML conference."

Even better, the data that powers DRPT's interactive capital projects explorer application, along with other enterprise data applications, will soon be shared between departments and agencies that utilize the same platform. This will lay the groundwork for collaboration and even more strategic use of data and associated resources.

"I think what we have ahead of us is just going to completely change the way that we report data and report our programs," says Patrice Strachan, DRPT's program manager. "This is really just the very beginning stages."

Read more about how DRPT is leading the way in federated data: www.tylertech.com/resources/blog-articles/move-to-open-data-reshapes-transportation-plan.

Connected Communities: Federated data making a difference

Coined by Tyler Technologies, "Connected Communities" use shared data to be more transparent, collaborative, and engaged. As a result, Connected Communities have the potential to be stronger, safer, and more vibrant. Through a common digital infrastructure that connects cities, counties, state, and federal government services and schools, Connected Communities can "talk" to each other and share insights across departments and geographic boundaries.

When traditional department and geographic boundaries are erased, leaders at all levels can make more informed decisions which increases coordination and efficiency across jurisdictions. Moreover, constituents become knowledgeable participants in their local, state, and federal government processes.

The bottom line: Connected Communities make it possible for pooled government resources to be best utilized by officials, staff, and residents.

FAACT: Agility for the future

The potential for what can be accomplished through federated data is illustrated by the celebrated Framework for Addiction Analysis and Community Transformation (FAACT) platform. Virginia used

the FAACT local-focused data-sharing and analytics platform to combine community and statewide data assets to address opioid misuse disorder, addiction, and other emerging issues for the benefit of the operators on the ground.

"When you first talk about data sharing across an organization as large as the Commonwealth, usually the first impression people get is publicly-available or open data," explains former Virginia Chief Data Officer Carlos Rivero. "They don't necessarily start thinking about restricted-use data assets being made available internally within the Commonwealth community to solve some of our most pressing issues."

The FAACT project took an immediate need for a crisis response and built up a scalable governance, policy, legal, and technical infrastructure in support of decision-makers. At the onset of the pandemic, Virginia repurposed the FAACT platform for COVID-19 response and again benefitted from expanded secure data sharing to other complex, multidisciplinary problems. As FAACT demonstrates, federated data can solve systemic and unexpected challenges with connected data.

Iterative improvements like those outlined in this article deliver immediate value through, among other things, access to new data sources, creation of innovative use cases, and expanded stakeholder support. The value for Virginia residents is that their Commonwealth is ready for whatever comes next.

About Tyler Technologies: VML Silver Community Business Member Tyler Technologies provides integrated software and technology services to the public sector. Tyler's data platform solution, Data & Insights, empowers local, state, and federal government entities to connect and transform siloed data into actionable insights. As the market leader in making government data discoverable, usable, and actionable, Tyler Data & Insights solution empowers public servants to create safer, smarter, and more vibrant communities that operate efficiently and connect transparently with internal and public stakeholders.

Join the connected communities vision in Virginia and connect with a Tyler Technologies expert today: www.tylertech.com/data.



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About the VML Community Business Membership (CBM) Program

As a CBM organization you hold a sustaining membership in VML and keep your firm or organization connected with the issues that are important to municipalities around you. Being a CBM places your organization at the forefront in the minds of VML members, ensuring you the visibility, access, and awareness that will help move your organization forward.

Please note that each level of membership includes both year-round benefits as well as benefits specific to VML's Annual Conference held in the fall.



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