



# 7 Tools for Small Communities

**Here's a look at the reality facing you if you work in a government supporting a small population community:**

- » **Budgets are especially tight with a small population**
- » **Personnel and other resources are limited**
- » **The workload is not decreasing, especially for small places, due to these factors:**
  - » **Governments of small population communities may still be managing a large land area containing a large number of assets**
  - » **As infrastructure continues to age, it requires more work and expense to upkeep**

These factors mean that those working in small governments find themselves struggling to help their communities thrive. Citizens are embracing technology at breakneck speed which elevates the expectation for their government to do so as well. There are a lot of options available for governments to integrate technology into their operations in order to improve efficiency without having to invest a lot of time or complicate processes. Here are a few of the technologies small governments are using to dramatically improve their service delivery and productivity:

## ***1. Maintenance Management Tools***

For small municipality and county governments working with limited budgets, competition between departments for resources is fierce. Even with a small team doing maintenance work, a computerized maintenance management system (CMMS) is useful for the reports and history it provides because that data is the linchpin of being able to illustrate all the work the department does and justify requests. No matter the size of

your operations, a system is helpful because of its ability to track data and readily provide information. That information helps reduce the struggle of trying to manage a variety of equipment and assets spread across the entire community. Having a system to track all the work you do enables you to have a better understanding of:

- » Daily, weekly and monthly workload
- » Preventive versus reactive workload
- » Backlog of work
- » Asset and equipment history
- » Labor hours and costs
- » Contractor hours and costs

Real world example



***“The most important thing we have gotten out of our CMMS was the ability to search our historical data. By looking at our work history, we can identify the areas of greatest need, which let us know if upgrades are called for. If any of the guys have to address a situation with a citizen, having records is helpful because we can tell them how many calls we’ve had about an issue and give them the history. That’s a huge advantage for them because they like to be informed when responding to the public.” City of Dunnellon, FL***

## 2. GIS-based Tools

GIS tools are especially important for small communities because even with a small population base, the government may be responsible for maintaining a large land area. Coordinating work between employees or departments who cover a large area is much easier with a program that lets you manage things geographically. Historically, GIS software has been expensive and complicated, thus limiting its use mostly to governments supporting mid-size to large population communities. The introduction of cloud-based GIS tools has opened this technology up to governments of all sizes because it’s now more cost-effective and user-friendly than ever. Whether in the office or the field, everyone has an understanding of what work is waiting and can get real-time updates to optimize workflow and movement around the community. GIS tools make it easy for employees to pull up their list of waiting work and see them sorted by proximity to where they are or by priority to decide what to tackle next. The power of using a GIS tool to visualize, analyze and interpret data and then make decisions is incredibly value.

Real world example



***“We have to submit our numbers to the state for biennial inspections. Our GIS tool has made this whole process more efficient. Employees used to have to worry about keeping up with paperwork, making sure everything was kept clean and dry, and giving that information to the administrator. Now, they use a tablet which lets us capture real-time data as they go. When a job is completed, crews don’t have to worry about data entry or paperwork. It’s cut out two steps of our reporting process.” City of Sanford, NC***

### 3. Inventory Management Tools

For small communities, inventory management is a prime area to tighten up in order to better understand their fast-moving, slow-moving and inactive inventory levels. In fact, studies have shown that a sizable chunk of inventory items will never be used. Managing inventory is more than simply making sure you know where the extra lightbulbs are kept. It plays an important role in effectively managing your operations to reduce expenses and increase productivity. An inventory management system helps ensure the right product is in the right place at the right time with minimal expense and effort. The visibility into data and access to historic trends helps ensure that inventory levels are optimized.

Real world example



***“We’ve saved money with an inventory management system because now we have a better understanding of our inventory usage and habits. If an employee requests a specific item, we can introduce less expensive options that are basically the same as what they are requesting. We can also negotiate better when we purchase on national contracts because we have data on how much we purchase from them. We did an analysis of our data and found that we’ve saved on average, anywhere from 30% to 80% on some of our items. That translates to an overall county-wide savings of 45% to 65% on our inventory.” Chaves County, NM***

### 4. Utility Bill Analysis Tools

Many of the expenses of a government are fairly fixed, but the one expense that can be adjusted — even on a daily basis — is utility expenditures. Those working within the constraints of limited budgets are especially good candidates to improve energy efficiency because

small improvements could be made for little effort which could net significant cost savings. A utility bill analysis software can give you a better understanding of the utility use trends in your operations, which is the starting point for improvements. There could be long-standing issues that are easily fixable once spotted, which could produce major savings. For example, underground leaks or issues with equipment erroneously using too much energy become glaringly obvious with utility bill analysis software. A system can compare costs per square foot and examine trends over time to give a true picture of what is going on and make it easy to spot issues, even long-standing ones. Often, those who start using a tool like this find savings quickly from resolving problems that had previously gone unnoticed. For small municipality and county governments, implementing a utility bill analysis tool is a simple way to start introducing energy efficiency measures into their organization without major time or money investments.

Real world example



***“I found consumption was increasing in vacant buildings due to improper controls settings and failing equipment. Because we were monitoring our utility use, we quickly caught these things. In one case, such issues in one building could have cost us over \$7,000 a year.” Iredell County, NC***

## 5. Capital Planning Tools

Thinking about creating a five, ten or twenty year capital expenditure forecast seems daunting. For governments of small communities, there is less latitude to make a major mistake with large expenditures, so having the data to make the correct choices is crucial. New technologies have made it easier than ever to create a plan which is accurate and properly prioritized. For small communities with aging infrastructure, it's especially important to be looking ahead to what capital expenses are on the horizon and planning for them now. It can be difficult, if not impossible, to squeeze a large, unplanned expense into the budget when it comes up by surprise.

## 6. Facility Usage Tools

Being able to recoup some, if not all, of the costs associated with the usage of public facilities can make a big difference for governments of small counties or municipalities. A facility use software allows users to document

actual facility usage costs to help justify rental rates and improve cost recovery. For the governments of small communities working with limited budgets, it's even more imperative to ensure no money is lost by allowing public use of facilities. Having a software tool to facilitate the process of keeping track of facility usage makes coordination easier and more convenient for all involved. A great deal of time and effort is saved when requestors can check availability themselves, submit requests for usage of space and equipment, and then have those requests automatically routed to the correct person for notification and approval.

## *7. Mobile Safety Tools*

Studies have shown that for every dollar spent on a safety program, employers can save anywhere from four to six dollars. The tools and technologies available to help prepare for, respond to, and recover from major events have come a long way in recent years. There are now software tools that provide access to disaster plans and safety documentation so employees can verify what to do no matter their location or internet connectivity. This is especially important for small communities because with limited resources and staff, it's vital for every person to pitch in and do what is expected of them in these events. When a crisis happens — no matter how big or small — it is critical that your employees know what their protocol is.

The benefits of all of these tools come down to the same thing — the ability for anyone to access the data they need from wherever they are. Breaking down data silos and enabling employees to get the information they need empowers them to make better decisions about what needs to be done and greatly improves their productivity. Weaving these types of technologies into operations enables your government to help your community thrive and succeed.

FacilityDude  
11000 Regency Pkwy #110  
Cary, NC 27518

1.866.455.DUDE (3833)  
info@facilitydude.com