



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: Tuesday, April 7, 2026.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. Contact Gage Harter with any questions.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Stafford County Government

Program Title: The Utilities Department Develops an Outage Map for Customers

Program Category: Agricultural, Environmental and Energy

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Donna Krauss

Title: Deputy County Administrator

Signature: *DKrauss*

VACo Achievement Award Nomination

Title: The Utilities Department Develops an Outage Map for Customers

Executive Summary

In early 2025, the Stafford County Utilities Department launched a user-friendly outage map webpage to inform customers about water service disruptions. Through several design iterations, the department worked to ensure the map met the needs of both internal workflows and public expectations. The live, public-facing outage map webpage delivers helpful, accessible information during water outages, offering peace of mind and improved communication for our community. This customized tool for communicating water outages both internally and externally, was developed entirely in-house with its own staff, without using outside consultants. This project highlights Stafford County's commitment to reliable, responsive service. Guided by the County's "customer first" value, the Utilities Department is dedicated to creating a positive experience by valuing, respecting and listening to all customers.

Problem Statement – What was the challenge or situation the County faced?

It was a goal of the Utilities Department for quite some time to create an outage map for the public and to improve internal communication about outages among County departments. Previously, the only way for water customers to get updates on an outage affecting them was to call customer service during business hours or an after-hours call service. Another difficulty was the speed at which outages were communicated internally. Previously, the Community Engagement Officer for the Utilities Department would be called whenever an outage occurred, regardless of the time of day, and would then manually write and send an email with the details to the internal group. This became cumbersome, and a solution to automate these messages was built into the outage map system.

Innovation/Methodology – How was the program was carried out, including staffing and financing details?

The outage map is an innovative tool that has enhanced communication with customers during water service disruptions. A group of staff across multiple departments, including Community Engagement, Utilities and GIS, came together to develop this project. From the initial concept to its public launch, the team worked collaboratively across departments to create a user-friendly platform informing customers about water service disruptions. Recognizing the importance of timely, accurate communication during outages, the team leaned forward to design a tool that prioritizes transparency and customer support.

This interactive map provides real-time updates on outages and repairs, giving residents instant access to critical information. Stafford Utilities customers can see on the outage map where an outage is located, and when the pin point is clicked, it shows details such as address for the service disruption, the number of residential and/or commercial customers affected, if a road is impacted and the status of repair. There was no direct cost for this project besides staff time. It used existing applications that Stafford County already had licenses for, including the ESRI

Enterprise License Agreement (Survey123, ArcGIS Online) and Microsoft 365 (Power Automate, Outlook).

Results/Impact – Evidence of success, such as cost savings, improved services, or community impact.

The outage map tool has improved transparency, built trust, and given peace of mind to over 40,000 customers during water service disruptions. It has created a seamless experience for customers seeking updates on their water service and restoration timelines. In addition to the benefit to the public, the internal communication about outages has drastically improved. There is no longer a delay in email communication being sent to staff across departments, as it no longer needs to be sent manually. Instead, as soon as the Field Operations supervisor on duty enters information on the outage map, an automated message is sent to the internal contact list, including all incident details. This has been particularly beneficial to the Customer Service and after-hours call center staff, as they can now receive information about the outage immediately and provide it to customers more quickly. With this more efficient process, staff time for communicating outages has significantly decreased, allowing them to complete other tasks in that time, resulting in cost savings to the organization.

Model Practices – Evidence of how the program can be replicated by other localities.

Organizations that already use the ESRI products of Survey123 and ArcGIS Online can replicate this process without any additional cost. With a skilled GIS team like that at Stafford County, this can be done entirely in-house with County staff, eliminating the need for an outside consultant. An outage map can be created without needing to purchase additional products besides the ESRI's Geographic Information System (GIS) software platform. With a team of dedicated staff, a collaborative effort will result in an outage map and notification system that meets the needs of a County.

Supplemental Materials:

- Outage Map webpage: <https://utilities.staffordcountyva.gov/outage>