



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: Friday, April 3, 2026.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. Contact [Gage Harter](#) with any questions.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: York County

Program Title: From Crisis to Code in Four Hours: York County's AI Recycling Lookup

Program Category: Technology

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Susan Goodwin

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Signature:

Program Title

Four-Hour Government Innovation: AI-Powered Recycling Lookup for 17,000 Households

Or

From Crisis to Code in Four Hours: York County's AI Recycling Lookup

County: York County, Virginia

Category: Information Technology

Executive Summary

In late 2025, York County residents unexpectedly lost curbside recycling service when the regional recycling program was cancelled. After nearly three months without service, the County secured a new vendor and restored recycling collection in January 2026. However, nearly 17,000 households needed to know their new recycling pickup day, creating widespread confusion and overwhelming County staff with phone calls.

On January 5, 2026, the County's Waste Management office received 492 calls in a single day from residents trying to determine their recycling schedule.

In response, York County's Information Technology department designed, built, and deployed a recycling day lookup application in approximately four hours using AI-assisted development tools. The web-based tool allows residents to enter their address and instantly receive their recycling pickup day, even if the address is entered with minor spelling errors.

The tool immediately improved access to recycling information and significantly reduced call volume to County offices. The solution required no new funding, no outside vendors, and can easily be replicated by other counties.

Problem or Challenge

On September 30, 2025, York County's regional recycling contract was terminated, leaving residents without curbside recycling service for nearly three months. During this time, County staff worked to negotiate a new vendor agreement to restore recycling service to the community.

When service resumed in January 2026, residents needed to determine their new recycling pickup day. York County serves approximately 72,000 residents, including 16,920 households

participating in curbside recycling. Communicating updated pickup schedules to this many households quickly became a significant challenge.

Residents began contacting County offices in large numbers seeking information about their recycling schedule. During January and February, the County's Waste Management office received approximately 4,000 calls related to recycling, roughly double the normal call volume. On January 5, 2026 alone, the department received 492 calls in a single day.

Board members and County leadership were also receiving complaints from frustrated residents. Existing information on the County website required residents to review collection maps or documents, which many found confusing or difficult to use.

County staff were unable to keep up with the volume of calls, and many residents were left waiting for responses.

York County needed a way to quickly provide residents with clear, accessible recycling schedule information without adding additional strain on staff.

Program Implementation

On the morning of January 6, 2026, York County's Information Technology department developed a solution.

Using AI-assisted development tools, staff generated the code for a recycling lookup application in approximately 30 minutes. Although the team did not include dedicated software developers, their familiarity with AI tools enabled rapid development.

The application was designed using lightweight HTML so it could easily integrate with the County website. Residents simply enter their street address and immediately receive their recycling pickup day.

To improve usability, the system uses fuzzy matching logic to interpret addresses even if residents enter spelling errors, abbreviations, or incomplete information.

For security purposes, the application references a structured data file containing recycling route information rather than accessing internal County systems directly. The tool was hosted on a County-controlled server and embedded within the County's CivicPlus website.

The remainder of the four-hour development period focused on preparing recycling route data, validating the application's accuracy, conducting security reviews, and deploying the system online.

The application went live on the County website around noon on January 6, 2026.

York County's prior investment in workforce training on artificial intelligence played an important role in the project's success. Through the County's AI roadmap initiative, staff had already developed familiarity with AI tools, enabling them to quickly apply these capabilities to solve a real-world operational challenge.

Financing and Staffing

The Recycling Day Lookup tool was implemented entirely using existing County staff and technology resources.

No additional funding was required for the project. The application used existing recycling route data, County web hosting infrastructure, and development tools already available to staff. AI-assisted development tools used during the project were already part of the County's broader workforce training initiative.

Because the tool was designed and deployed in approximately four hours, the only cost associated with the project was minimal staff time.

The project demonstrates how local governments can leverage existing resources and emerging technologies to deliver innovative services without requiring new funding or outside consultants.

Results and Impact

The Recycling Day Lookup tool immediately improved residents' ability to determine their recycling pickup day and reduced pressure on County staff responding to public inquiries.

The application serves York County's 16,920 recycling households within a community of approximately 72,000 residents. Residents can now quickly enter their address on the County website and receive their recycling pickup schedule instantly.

Prior to the launch of the tool, the County's Waste Management office experienced a surge in calls from residents trying to determine their pickup day. On January 5, 2026, the department received 492 calls in a single day.

The lookup tool launched around noon on January 6, 2026. Within approximately one hour, complaints circulating on social media began to decline as residents shared the tool with neighbors and encouraged others to use it.

During the week following deployment, daily call volume dropped to approximately 277 calls per day, returning to normal operational levels. Waste Management staff directly attributed this reduction to the availability of the recycling lookup tool.

The application allowed residents to obtain the information they needed immediately while allowing County staff to focus on other service priorities.

Innovation and Replicability

The Recycling Day Lookup tool demonstrates how local governments can use artificial intelligence to rapidly respond to operational challenges and improve public service delivery.

Traditionally, developing a new government web application requires weeks or months of planning, procurement, and programming. In contrast, York County designed, built, and deployed a fully functional citizen-facing application in approximately four hours.

The project highlights how AI-assisted development can empower public employees to quickly create practical digital solutions even when dedicated software development resources are not available.

The tool is also highly replicable. Most counties already possess the data required to implement similar lookup tools, and the approach can easily be adapted for other services such as waste collection schedules, school attendance zones, or public service districts.

York County has actively shared the story and lessons learned from this project with local government peers and professional organizations so other communities can benefit from the approach.

The project demonstrates how thoughtful adoption of emerging technologies can help local governments respond quickly to community needs while improving efficiency and service delivery.