

UBCM COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

2008 APPLICATION

NAME OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen

PROJECT OR PROGRAM TITLE: RDOS, School District 67 and City of Penticton – Phone System

SELECT YOUR CATEGORY: (CHOOSE ONE ONLY)

- BEST PRACTICES
- BEST PRACTICES, WEBSITE
- BEST PRACTICES, ANNUAL REPORTING
- LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION, SMALL COMMUNITY
- LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION, MID-SIZE COMMUNITY
- LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION, LARGE COMMUNITY
- LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION, REGIONAL DISTRICT
- PARTNERSHIPS: LOCAL GOVERNMENT & FIRST NATIONS PARTNERSHIPS

CONTACT PERSON: Tim Bouwmeester

CONTACT TITLE: Information Services Manager EMAIL: tbouwmeester@rdos.bc.ca

PHONE: 250-490-4127 FAX: 250-492-0063

BY MAKING THIS APPLICATION, I UNDERSTAND THAT ALL MATERIALS WILL BE KEPT BY UBCM AND ARE AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING BY OTHERS THROUGH THE UBCM COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS LIBRARY.

SIGNATURE:  NAME (PRINT): Tim Bouwmeester DATE: July 21, 2008

APPLICATION CHECKLIST:

Remember to send 8 copies of your entire application package for distribution to the Selection Committee. **EACH** copy should contain:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A completed application form | IF APPLYING TO ANNUAL REPORTING: |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A one-paragraph summary of the project/program being submitted | <input type="checkbox"/> A copy of the Annual Report |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A five-page summary report (max. 5 pgs) | IF APPLYING TO PARTNERSHIPS: |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A letter from the Mayor supporting the application | <input type="checkbox"/> A copy of the partner contact info list |

In addition to the eight complete application packages, please include:

- One CD/electronic copy of the entire submission

RDOS, School District 67 and City of Penticton – Phone System

Best Practices

Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen





One Paragraph Summary: Regional District, Municipal Government, School District Partnership

The Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) has limited resources to spend on Information Technology (IT) infrastructure and like all local governments, wants to ensure it is getting the most for every dollar spent. With the support of the RDOS Board of Directors, Penticton City Council, School District 67, and respective Trustees, a partnership was formed in 2007 to implement a modern phone system for the RDOS. Much of the phone infrastructure and equipment maintenance, including upgrades to the system, is performed by School District 67. The City of Penticton's high speed fiber network provides a base for the system to work on. As a result of this partnership the RDOS now has a state of the art phone system which allows staff to provide a better level of service to its constituents while passing on significant cost savings to the tax payer. To our knowledge, this is the first partnership of this type between a Regional District, Municipal Government and School District.

IT Resource Challenges at the RDOS

The RDOS has an IT staff of 1 person who is responsible for maintaining 11 servers and over 100 workstations located in multiple buildings throughout the southern Okanagan and Similkameen valleys. The same person is responsible for maintaining our major software applications (including the finance systems), the computer network and internet system as well as our phone system. In 2005 our Telus phone system reached the end of its life-cycle and in the first 6 months of 2007 the voice mail system had gone down twice, once for a period of 3 consecutive days. Replacement parts were also becoming difficult to find. It became apparent that we had to replace the system.



RDOS Systems Administrator in our Server Room

The RDOS contacted several telephone vendors to evaluate the available options. Our preferred solution was a VoIP (Voice-over-Internet Protocol) system which provides more functionality and capabilities than our older, conventional system. It became clear immediately that the RDOS did not have adequate funding for a current, fully functioning VoIP system. Another challenge associated with moving to a VoIP system is that they are very complicated and difficult to setup and maintain. The RDOS simply does not have the staff resources to take on this additional workload.

The Partnership

The City of Penticton and School District 67 currently use a Cisco phone system which utilizes the City of Penticton's fiber optic network. They have a stable, proven system that has been working well for several years. In 2007 the RDOS entered into a partnership with these two organizations with the RDOS accessing School District VoIP functionality and technical expertise through the City of Penticton's fiber network. Now, when someone calls the RDOS, the phone call actually goes to the School District 67 main communication switch and is then relayed (unknowingly to the caller) directly to the receptionist at the RDOS. The receptionist can then transfer the call to the intended recipient. The same process takes place for outgoing calls.

RDOS Main Office



City of Penticton City Hall



School District 67 - Penticton High School

Old RDOS Phone and Audix System



Central Switch at School District Data Center



Benefits of the Partnership

A strong partnership between the RDOS, City of Penticton and School District 67 has demonstrated improved efficiency, productivity and cost effectiveness. Some of these benefits to the RDOS are:

- Savings on equipment;
 - Much of the necessary equipment was already put in place by the School District so the RDOS did not have to purchase it.
 - Any replacement phone equipment that the RDOS requires is now purchased along with School District 67 allowing the RDOS to take advantage of quantity discounts.
- Savings of over 50% on long distance charges since joining the School District 67 plan because of quantity discounts.
- By using this model the RDOS has the full functionality of a robust phone system while minimizing the additional workload on our single IT staff member.
- During emergencies, such as the wildfires in 2004, it will be much easier to share resources between the various agencies since we are all on the same system (i.e. Emergency Operations Center at the RDOS using extra phones from the School District or sending maps created by GIS staff at the RDOS to City of Penticton plotters).
- In addition to emergencies, setting up a common infrastructure allows the RDOS, City of Penticton and School District 67 to share in the development of new functionality in the future reducing the costs for all parties involved. Examples of services that the RDOS can now take advantage of include:

- video conferencing
- paging system
- offsite backups of data
- Improved customer service:
 - By joining our PRI (primary rate interface) together with the School District, the RDOS can now take on more incoming calls at any one time. In the past we could only take a maximum of 8 calls at one time before the next caller would get a busy signal. Now if our full allotment of 8 calls is being used and the School District has lines available, we have access to those lines as well and can now, potentially take over 30 calls at any one time.
 - Using this new technology the RDOS can track both missed and placed calls and can forward messages more effectively.
 - Small-scale emergency notifications can be circulated to the public using an automated dialling system with a pre-recorded message (e.g. Boil water advisory).



RDOS receptionist with her wireless headset and IP switchboard

Solutions Applicable and Transferable to Other UBCM members

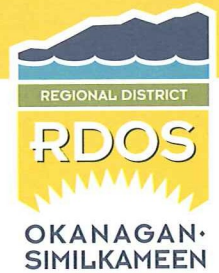
This model of a Regional Districts partnering with a member municipality and School District to offer better customer service to its constituents at a lower price is something that can be incorporated by jurisdictions across the Province of BC. This partnership can serve as a model in setting up a phone system, basic IT infrastructure, or any of the services that are commonly provided across jurisdictions.

101 Martin Street, Penticton, British Columbia V2A 5J9

Tel: 250.492.0237 Fax: 250.492.0063

Toll Free: 877.610.3737

Email: info@rdos.bc.ca



July 15, 2008

2008 Community Excellence Awards
Union of BC Municipalities
60-10551 Shellbridge Way
Richmond, BC V6X 2W9

Attn: Joslyn Young, Executive Coordinator

I am pleased to offer my support for the application of the Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen to the UBCM 2008 Community Excellence Awards for the RDOS, City of Penticton, School District 67 Partnership and Phone System Project.

The RDOS has very limited resources in terms of personnel and equipment for their Information Technology and phone systems. I am proud of the partnership the RDOS has created with the City of Penticton and School District 67. With this partnership the RDOS now has a state of the art phone system, allowing the RDOS to provide a better level of service to its constituents and with a significant cost savings to the tax payer.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Ashton", is written over a horizontal line.

Dan Ashton, RDOS Chair

TB

Cc: T. Bouwmeester, Information Services Manager