

## Disaster Service Worker Tracking and Deployment Portal

**Overview:** The County of San Luis Obispo developed a system to track the skills and availability of Disaster Service Workers (DSWs) to enable an accurate skill match and a fast deployment of resources to help the local community.

**Challenge:** The Covid-19 Pandemic forced the entire County of San Luis Obispo to transform and adopt telework almost overnight. Many public and private basic services were forced to alter their business models or shut down entirely. To help alleviate the lack of basic services and provide new ones, the County called upon its entire workforce to serve as Disaster Service Workers (DSW). Leadership was keenly aware that the situation was fluid; assigning and tracking DSW workforce members on a daily basis needed to be nimble. With 23 separate departments each tracking their own workforce, the County needed an online solution to replace the manual consolidation of multiple spreadsheets.

The County used an agile framework as the process to address this challenge. A multi-department, cross-functional team set out to determine requirements and priorities, set measurable goals early and often, and met daily to ensure progress.

**Solution:** The pressing need for a solution called for empowering all team members to fully leverage their skills to improve delivery time. The first step was understanding the strengths of the team. A strategy that kept everyone actively involved was essential for a quickly deployable solution. To accomplish this need, the team embraced the concept of Citizen Developers and, in a leap of faith, utilized the Microsoft M365 automation platform with its suite of automation tools, not yet widely adopted or used by the County, including Microsoft Forms, SharePoint, Power Automate, Power BI, and Power Apps.

**Innovation** In addition to gathering requirements, Business Analysts used automation tools to build an online form for daily DSW check ins and an online form for gathering information about DSWs and their skills. Disciplined developers coached Citizen Developers, scripted repeatable tasks, built customized extensible integrations, and curated the collected data. In short, developers were able to focus on the high-tech challenges, while empowering users on the

team. With the curated data, Business Analysts were then able to build command center dashboards with live data and command center tools for allocating and tracking DSWs.

**Results:** Command center dashboards provided the leadership team with a real time overview of available staff and enabled them to make data-based decisions in real time. Our front-line leaders were provided with tools for intelligently allocating DSWs matching skillsets to the most appropriate need. Examples include: people with medical skills were queued up for community health needs, people with purchasing skills were tapped to negotiate the procurement of medical supplies, and others with more general skills were able to diligently bring food and supplies to the vulnerable and less fortunate members of our community.

**Replicability:** Other Counties can reuse the solution for any need that matches workers and their skills with assignments based on availability. As the skills required for one crisis may be different from another crisis, our team created reusable scripts to jump start the DSW solution tailored to the skills needed to mitigate the crisis at hand. While other counties can leverage many of the scripts created to spin up a DSW solution, our team's disposition to build upon traditional roles, and be open to change and to empowering others with automation tools proved to be our most valuable asset.

#### **Program Contact**

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Process flow: [Disaster Service Worker Diagram](#)