HOW CALRECYCLE ACCELERATES DISASTER RECOVERY WITH CITY INNOVATE

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The California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) is committed to protecting the environment and climate through waste reduction, recycling, and reuse programs. The agency is also tasked with providing life-changing disaster recovery efforts. In 2022, CalRecycle began partnering with City Innovate to respond to disasters and deliver critical services – like debris clean-up and tree removal – faster than ever before.

FREQUENT FIRES INCREASE CLEAN-UP DEMANDS

According to CalRecycle, climate-fueled wildfires are the state's new normal, with six of the 10 largest wildfires in state history occurring since 2020. When wildfires hit a community, they are devastating and deadly. After the flames are extinguished, CalRecycle coordinates with local, state, and federal partners to dispatch crews to remove burned metal, concrete, contaminated soil, and ash from charred properties at no cost to wildfire survivors who join the state program. These efforts date back to 2007, when following an El Dorado County wildfire, the state called on CalRecycle to help manage cleanup before contaminated runoff could reach Lake Tahoe. Since then, CalRecycle has led the cleanup of over 21,000 properties in 28 counties.

As the fires have become larger and more frequent, CalRecycle looks for ways to make cleanups more efficient and effective, laser focused on helping wildfire survivors recover and rebuild. One way they've improved their operations is by rethinking how they select and deploy contracted resources.

DURING EMERGENCIES, EVERY MOMENT MATTERS

When a wildfire occurs and a neighborhood has been devastated, CalRecyle must wait until the area has cooled before they can deploy clean-up crews to the area. And yet, as soon as CalRecycle has the greenlight to start clean-up efforts, they're focused on getting qualified crews on-site as soon as possible to help residents begin to rebuild their lives.

To do this, the CalRecycle team oversees two efforts simultaneously. One, they recruit vendors year-round, in case a disaster happens. Two, when a disaster occurs, they send a Request for Bid to vendors, with specific needs to address the effects of the fire. Unlike a traditional contract process, where vendors apply before a closing date and then an evaluation period follows, CalRecycle's work never stops and these processes happen concurrently. The State is consistently seeking qualified vendors to serve, and at any time, they may seek bids from any number of those qualified vendors.

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Prior to partnering with City Innovate, the agency began to develop a bench – a list of vendors – that they could potentially call on when a natural disaster occurred. Once a need was established, such as tree removal in a particular region of the state, CalRecycle would review the list of vendors and attempt to reach out to only the vendors who were qualified to do the work. This early iteration enabled the department to see the value of pre-qualified vendor pools. Together with City Innovate, they built on this concept and streamlined their operations to realize results. Now, once the agency is "mission tasked" to respond to a fire, they're able to choose a vendor and award a Request for Bid in three days or less.

With City Innovate's Document Process Automation™ CalRecycle was able to accelerate their ability to find vendors to deliver live-changing services, without compromising their compliance, insights, and program oversight.

A CLOSER LOOK

Imagine you're overseeing an emergency clean-up response in your state following a devastating fire in region 2.

You're using a single spreadsheet with a list of potential vendors, you start searching through the columns and notes to find vendors who are authorized to work in that region.

Then, you need to verify that they can handle the volume. Are these vendors qualified for handling 0-1,000 trees or 1,000-3,000 trees? You find yourself sorting the spreadsheet's columns again.

Now, you want to cross-check this list to ensure that their references and qualifications are up to date. If they're not, what do you do? You don't want to delete them from the big spreadsheet, but you want to filter them from your own search.

You've been working on this project for several days and learned that the fire has spread to region 1 and you need to find vendors who can serve that geography too. Do you restart your search?

And since the fire has gained media attention, more vendors are submitting their information through the intake form in an effort to join the recovery efforts – have you ensured that these new vendors are being included in your results? And if another member of your team is working on this project at the same time, how are you handling version control of the files?

Managing this type of vendor database is messy. You need a platform in place to capture data submitted via vendor intake form(s), to evaluate vendors and put them into appropriate categories, and to interact with the information provided.

City Innovate leverages Document Process Automation to make teams' work more seamless. Various teams can use, review and evaluate, and distribute the workload across a team for greater collaboration and accountability.

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INCREASING SPEED AND EFFECTIVENESS

CalRecycle's old vendor bench lived in Word documents and Sharepoint. The team recruited potential vendors, and added the contacts to a very large file, saved on their Intranet. The system was difficult to maintain. In addition, staff had to keep track of thousands of supporting documents, some digital and some paper, from vendors across the state. When a disaster occurred, staff were tasked with searching through the enormous file to find appropriate contractors. During this process, staff sometimes discovered that the information submitted by vendors was incomplete, some vendors were not qualified for a specific job, and CalRecycle staff had to revisit the big list to select alternative potential vendors.

CalRecycle tapped City Innovate to make the process cleaner, more organized, and easier for vendors to be added to the pre-qualified vendor pool. The agency needed staff to be able to search for vendors by categories or qualifications, instead of sifting through a statewide general list. The team leveraged City Innovate's intelligent templates to build vendor intake forms that were clear and understandable for businesses to submit all of their materials online. These templates can be easily updated by staff without down time. All vendor submissions are submitted through City Innovate's submission portal, enabling staff to quickly review a series of pass/fail criteria and validate references. Once a vendor is approved, they are considered a member of the pre-qualified vendor pool.

A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO SOLICITING BIDS

In the past when CalRecycle needed to draft a new Request for Bid, they'd look for an old solicitation that was similar to their needs, scrub the data from the old project, and resave it. This led to many versions of documents with similar titles, and no easy way of determining which document contained the most up-to-date boilerplate, legal language, and submission instructions. It was tedious and time-consuming. By building their solicitations directly in the City Innovate platform for Document Process Automation, staff can quickly find what they need. Documents are easily accessible, always up to date, and provide time savings by preserving the areas of the document that don't need to change and intelligently highlighting the fields that do. Instead of spending time working against old documents, the templates play a supporting role to help staff accomplish their work with less friction, which means getting help to people in need, faster.

Success for CalRecycle is being able to continuously recruit qualified vendors, and ensure that the turnaround time from sending a Request for Bid and making an award is faster than before – to offer the most help to people in need. City Innovate is helping them achieve these goals by making their work more efficient and easier to manage.

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CALRECYCLE: A ROLE MODEL IN GOVERNMENT INNOVATION AND EFFICIENCY

The CalRecycle team has cultivated a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in the pursuit of serving Californians. They enlisted City Innovate's education team to ensure that they were making the most of the platform. Then, as CalRecycle's early adopters became more familiar with the abilities of City Innovate's solutions, they helped their colleagues learn how they could best use the tools to meet the demands of their daily responsibilities. CalRecycle is committed to fostering new skills, and City Innovate continues to be present and supportive as they launch new services and beyond. By learning new ways to do their work better, CalRecycle demonstrates to other agencies that there are always opportunities for growth and innovation to better serve the people of their state.

To learn how City Innovate can help governments better respond to critical events, **request a demo**.