

1. What business problem were you trying to solve by implementing this project/application?

The Supervisor of Elections Office (“SOE”) in Alachua County, FL had discovered that other FL elections offices were using online training to more efficiently train temporary poll workers before each election. State law requires a minimum of three hours of training for all poll workers before those workers can work for an election. The SOE began investigating a way to provide a portion of the required training in an online format, as an alternative to labor-intensive lecture-style sessions.

Their initial forays into online training applications were disappointing at best. They discovered an excellent software package from a private company, but the software would have cost at least \$15,000 per year to license, plus about \$7,500 to install. This was simply not feasible in their budget. They also tried to implement an existing open-source application. This effort lasted a short while and is listed in more detail under Question 4.

At this point, the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners Information & Telecommunication Services (“ITS”) Department approached the SOE office about creating a solution for them. The ITS Department sat down with SOE and came up with a plan to create a custom, web-based, training software package for free, to provide to the SOE office. The SOE stated emphatically that they needed the most user-friendly training system that ITS could develop.

2. Describe the features, functionality and benefits of the project/application.

The software developed by the ITS Department works by an SOE staff person accessing the online training system and entering text-based chapter information for a course, and then attaching supporting files as needed. Word files, PDFs, spreadsheets, images, movie files and more can be attached. Each course can hold as many chapters as needed. Also, at the end of each chapter, the SOE staff enters test questions and answers. They create “sessions” for these courses, which start and stop on a specific date and can enroll specific poll workers in each session. When a session “opens,” the workers review the text material and supporting files at their own pace, and are required to take the tests at the end of the various chapters. Their test scores are saved in the system, and the poll workers see their test scores at the completion of the exam. The chapters and tests can also be organized into Lesson Plans by the SOE staff, offering more flexibility to the process.

3. Describe the technology used to create the application.

The Online Training Application is a Microsoft .NET Framework Web Application which stores its data in a Microsoft SQL Server Database.

4. Did the project/application extend or replace an existing system? If yes, provide a description of what was accomplished.

Prior to working with the ITS Department, the SOE Office found a free open-source package, installed it and used it for one election’s poll worker training. Unfortunately, this free software was both confusing and cumbersome. Poll workers had a difficult time logging in. They first had to create an account, then notify the SOE Training Staff

about the new account. Then the staff would have to assign courses and re-notify the poll workers. This confused a great number of the poll workers, who then simply declined to use the online software. The software was simply too complex and confusing. Also, SOE staff had a hard time getting reports out of the system for the poll workers who did use the software.

5. How has the business process been improved as a result of the project/application? Provide data that demonstrates this improvement.

After a few short weeks of development, the ITS Department delivered the software to the SOE Office in time to be used for the Primary Election. Right off the bat, the software started proving itself as a useful and effective tool. Here's an early comment that came in from a poll worker:

"I wanted to compliment whoever it was who designed the online training. Usually stuff like that is problematical - slow, or drops you out, or freezes up, or doesn't give clear directions - but your web training site was really smooth and well-done. Such a nice change! Catherine (Kate) Lee"

This comment was fairly typical of the reaction the poll workers had upon using the software during this first election. With the online software, the training was self-paced, meaning that an experienced poll worker could quickly refresh themselves on information they had previously learned. The tests at the end of the chapters ensure that the poll workers know the required material. All poll workers must attend a role specific class. Those poll workers with roles requiring more than 3 hours of training per election can now meet their requirements by attending a single role-specific class, rather than driving to two or three separate classes. The number of poll workers reporting that they couldn't access the online system dropped from 20-30 under the complex, open source package down to just 2 with the new system from the ITS Dept.

The SOE personnel are seeing excellent time savings as well. Also, the SOE staff can access much more comprehensive reports through the online training application. This means that they can track the success rates of specific questions to identify weak points in their training, and then adjust accordingly. Likewise, they can filter out consistently poor-scoring poll workers, in favor of worker who demonstrate better knowledge of the important election laws.

6. What has been the economic benefit of the project/application (cost savings, cost avoidance, etc.?)

The SOE Office has not had to purchase a vendor product for their training needs, which is a savings of several thousand dollars a year. The commercial software package that was first looked at was priced at **\$15,000 per year**, plus **\$7,500 in start-up costs**. These costs have been avoided entirely. The training expenses per election have been reduced as well. During a typical large election, the main staff person in charge of poll worker training now saves around **20 hours of lecture time**, because they have been able to reduce the number of lectures provided. The poll workers can use their time efficiently by using the online training system, and then attending 1 to 4 hour role-specific trainings. Also, they can keep their work schedules as normal and take the online training on their own time instead of taking time off from work.

7. Who benefits from this use of the project/application?

The new online software has been used for several elections in Alachua County. At this point the software has been thoroughly tested and has been found to be very beneficial and helpful to everyone that uses it; both the SOE staff and the poll workers love it.

The poll workers save time and transportation costs when they use the online system. Having the application work online means that a larger number of individuals can become poll workers. The SOE staff has seen massive productivity gains since they can reduce the number of lecture classes they have to offer and they have been able to use the reports from the online training system to improve their training, by focusing on questions that are commonly missed in the online tests. SOE staff workers have been able to identify poll workers who potentially are failing to understand and pass the tests, and have then been able to coach these workers or release them if necessary.

8. What is the current usage of the project/application and what is the population that is eligible to use it?

During the first election that the online poll worker training was offered, about one out of six poll workers signed up to take courses online. However, less than 3 elections later, that number has doubled, to one out of every three poll workers signing up for the online courses.

Additionally, other county groups have used the same online training software. The Alachua County Department of Public Safety now uses the system to train and test their staff on emergency procedures, and the software is expected to be rolled out to other groups soon.

9. How has the project/application been marketed to end-users?

Returning poll workers are asked to select the type of training they wish to receive: either in-person lectures, or online training through this solution. More and more workers are selecting the online training, especially among the growing number of younger workers. The SOE office gets a large number of poll worker applicants from the University of Florida, and these young adults expect online and electronic training materials.

10. Provide a link to the project/application if available for external viewing.

<http://elections.alachua.fl.us/images/mytraining/1.png> <http://elections.alachua.fl.us/images/mytraining/2.png>
<http://elections.alachua.fl.us/images/mytraining/3.png>

11. Describe the project's collaborative environment in terms of governance, funding, project management, communication and other relevant data.

The project was undertaken and managed by the ITS Department. ITS worked with the SOE staff to identify the needs of the software and developed the software. The SOE staff reviewed the work to make sure the functionality delivered worked as the SOE staff has suggested. The ITS team is funded from the portion of the county budget already allocated to the ITS department. No additional funds were needed.