



City of Kenora

The Connected City

Case Study

The City of Kenora, Ontario introduces a new web portal to make accessing local government services more convenient for Kenora area residents.

The Customer:

Kenora is a city of 15,000 residents that is situated on the busy Trans Canada Highway. It is a gateway to both Lake of the Woods and to over 3 000 square miles of recreational country to the north. In summer, the population goes up to 60,000.

The Challenge:

Working closely with Lake of the Woods Business Incentive Corporation (LOWBIC), the City of Kenora wanted to increase community development through the use of technology. LOWBIC and the City of Kenora wanted to achieve this by setting up a web portal. A number of requirements were to be met by the portal.

The City wanted to improve conveniences for its residents and businesses by making a number of City services available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Web access to City services is also important for the large number of summer residents who own property in Kenora but reside outside of the City during the other seasons. The City also wanted to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the local Government.

A strong portal would help to boost economic development by helping to attract businesses and tourists to the Kenora region and by providing a platform for local business to market their products and services through the web.

The City sought a web portal that would keep residents and tourists up to date on Kenora region news and information.

Enhancing community collaboration was expected to increase public interaction, involvement and input. The portal would showcase that the city of Kenora is worth investing in – a great place to live, visit, work and play.

The Solution:

After careful consideration and a comparison of five Portal applications from other companies, Don Cameron, chief administration officer of Kenora-based LOWBIC said "choosing Imex was an obvious decision because the iCity product not only provided the most functionality, but also allowed LOWBIC and the City to have more control over the planning and management of the portal. The iCity electronic services delivery architecture was very flexible, yet quite powerful and was found to be the best solution that could meet the diverse services requirements of the City, Community and local businesses."

According to Cameron, Imex also went the "extra mile" by forming a partnership with Overdrive Design Labs, a local web design company which "delighted" LOWBIC because "we wanted our people to benefit from the association that we were going to have with these gurus from the big city." Greg Kaskiw, City of Kenora IT Co-ordinator adds, "Imex Systems has worked with us every step of the way and is one of the most professional company we have had the pleasure of dealing with so far."

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

The Kenora Portal aggregates Kenora's Community information, provides online services to its citizens and promotes economic development by providing e-commerce capabilities for local businesses and organizations.

The iCity product has successfully passed Microsoft tests for Windows Server and .Net and SQL Server2005 components.

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Karen Brown
Manager Finance and Administration
City of Kenora

The Technology:

The solution is based on iCity, the Connected Government Framework entirely developed using Microsoft .Net technology. The solution was specifically designed as a local e-Government solution with several extended functionalities for community collaboration and local economic development.

iCity leverages web services extensively to provide a set of application modules with seamless integration between them with several common foundation blocks. The features of iCity include single sign-on with identity management, a powerful payment engine capable of handling various forms of online payments and a content management system to effectively produce, manage and publish the portal content. "The single sign-on across the board for every single function/application within the system is a great convenience for our citizens. We haven't seen any other system provide such functionalities", said Ben Pawlowski, City of Kenora Portal Administrator.

The iCity solution is also capable of speech applications integrated into the portal to provide dual channel convenience of IVR and web based services and information delivery.

Effective data exchange/integration with various Municipal backend applications is an important aspect of iCity. Security, Scalability and Reliability are the three base design features considered in implementing Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) for iCity. The system is flexible to adapt to various City business processes and work flows.

Centralized admin functionality for all services with hierarchical admin privileges facilitates easy administration of users and management of all services delivered by iCity. "The availability of so many e-Services and self-service features have reduced the number of customer service calls and increased our staff efficiency", adds Heather Kasprick, Customer Service Coordinator, City of Kenora.

Project Implementation:

Once the contract was signed, the solution was delivered on time and on budget. The keys to successful delivery were: extensive planning, effective project management and teamwork between the City of Kenora Teams and Imex Systems Inc. The City of Kenora and LOWBIC staff enthusiastically participated in the project and made several key decisions in the process. The project organization, tools and methodologies used by Imex were also major contributors to the success of the project. "Imex Systems Inc. is highly customer service focused and addressed every problem we encountered with a relevant solution", said Ben Pawlowski, City of Kenora Portal Administrator.

Results:

iCity was able to effectively fulfill the mandate set out for the project. The portal received an enthusiastic response from local press and Kenora residents, who were able to enjoy "any time any where" convenience in obtaining a wide range of City services and accessing community information. "Imex Systems made the City of Kenora, the most connected community and Government in North America", states Karen Brown, Manager Finance and Administration, City of Kenora. "Our City's ability to communicate with our citizens has improved dramatically as we are now able to keep our citizens informed with personalized information, alerts and bulletins."

Multiple payment options (Interac Online/Debit card, Credit Cards, and Pre-authorized Bank Account Debits) offered by the payment engine has provided maximum flexibility and convenience for Kenora's citizens and businesses to make online payments for various services.

The Content Management System (CMS) helped the City to delegate portal content responsibility to individual content owners/subject matter experts and removed delays and bottlenecks in keeping site content up-to-date. The CMS and the web analytics provided by the portal helped to target the right markets and effectively present Kenora to tourists.

The portal and its web casting facility have enabled effective tourism promotion and have succeeded in providing a platform for skill development for local businesses. Local small businesses are also able to obtain web presence by developing and publishing their own professional-looking web sites and online stores without requiring any web programming assistance. These e-tools, together with the Kenora e-Mall is helping to boost the market reach of the Kenora local businesses.

The local community is benefiting immensely from a wide variety of collaboration tools and local community organizations are able to utilize the portal services to recruit volunteers and collecting donations.

Visit www.kenora.ca to see iCity - the Connected Government Framework in action.

