

How to Do More with Less While Cutting Municipal Budgets Nationwide

Written by Ginny Grimsley

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Software Developer & Volunteer Firefighter Cites Local Governments that are Developing Creative Solutions for Budget Cuts

Since the economic collapse in 2008, American households haven't been alone in feeling the pain of budget cuts. Cities and counties have been working with shrinking budgets, often leading to layoffs and reductions in services.

But since many services communities provide are vital – from education to paramedics and firefighters to law enforcement – community leaders across the country are getting creative and innovative.

“Throughout the United States, slimmer budgets are resulting in two outcomes: 1) killing jobs and services, and 2) coming up with ways to sustain programs and even improve them with brilliant ideas,” says Dion Nugent, a volunteer firefighter and CEO for a software development company that works closely with paramedics, emergency medical technicians and fire fighters throughout the country.

“I prefer the latter. One blessing of troubled times is that they inspire inventive responses, which can revolutionize an industry. We're seeing that every day at the local government level.”

Nugent cites several examples leadership devising ways to do more with less:

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- Consolidation and multi-purposing in Texas' Grapevine-Colleyville school district. The district's superintendant never thought he'd have to focus on creative financing, but that has been necessary to keep his schools running. Parking lots formerly used only during Friday night football games are now rented out on weekdays to a company in need of overflow parking. The district's printing press is being put to extra use churning out city documents -- for which the schools are paid, and school buses are selling ad space on their sides. All these efforts are chipping away at a \$5 million budget deficit.
- Using technology to streamline first-response data on Captiva Island, Fla. Captiva Fire Department first-responders used to spend hours on paper work and sometimes risked misspelling critical information such as patient medication. The department has bought time, and greater efficiency, with new software from Forté Holdings, Inc. Called iPCR, (www.ipcrems.com), it takes electronic patient-care reporting to new levels of portability and affordability. The software utilizes iPads, which are much lighter and significantly less expensive than the Toughbooks laptops many stations now use. The innovation has allowed the department to not only maximize its first-responders' time, it has improved response times.
- The Civic Protection Institute – a nationwide effort. Several studies find that what reduces crime most effectively is to have law enforcement visible in the public. However, there are a number of functions police officers have served that do not directly affect crime. The Civic Protection Institute (www.civicprotectioninstitute.org) is a private, not-for-profit organization that enlists capable citizens to shoulder many of these extracurricular services, including “a pool of competent private sector agencies, vetted and certified to high quality standards, for public sector services,” according to the website.

About Dion Nugent

Dion Nugent is a volunteer firefighter and CEO of Forté Holdings, a leading provider of health-care software solutions in the United States. For 30 years, the company has combined technological expertise with input from medical workers to develop software that supports and improves patient care and administrative processes within the health-care industry. The company's flagship products – iPCR (patient-care reporting) and the Forte8000 line of billing and EHR – address the needs of specific medical workers, from first responders to private practitioners. iPCR is designed for the iPad and is Gold-certified by the National Emergency

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Medical Services Information System.