



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
2012

STATUS:
Laureate

Organization:
Tetra Tech

Organization URL:
www.tetrattech.com

Project Name:
Water Management Webcast Series for EPA

What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address? What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?

Managing water resources in the United States is a tremendous challenge that involves balancing the needs of communities with industry and government. The stakes are very high, though, with precious and limited fresh water supplies at risk, potentially affecting the health of millions of people. At the heart of water management are a number of complex federal regulations that govern how water resources need to be managed, how waste water is to be handled, and so forth. Tetra Tech, an environment engineering company, supports EPA in its efforts to educate federal, state, local and tribal agencies; watershed practitioners; environmental organizations and other others on the complex issues and evolving science surrounding water quality and watershed management. Many of the webcasts that EPA conducts help the regulated community better understand and comply with the EPA's clean water environmental regulations. Using cloud-based webcasting software, Tetra Tech has been able to educate thousands of individuals on various water topics, including Clean Water Act regulations. Not only do webcast participants listen to the live broadcast, but the archive is accessed by thousands from the EPA website over time. The net effect of this effort has been a significant improvement in local knowledge about water management where it matters. At the same time, the ability to train people remotely using technology has enabled Tetra Tech to save more thousands of tons of CO2 emissions from limiting air and car travel for trainers and students. The success of Tetra Tech's webcasts is measured by the number of attendees that register and attend EPA's free webcasts, and the kinds of questions and follow-up response that are generated after each webcast event and

spread (by word of mouth and other mechanisms) about the tools, techniques, and information presented in the webcasts.

Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.

The Tetra Tech webcast program utilizes MediaPlatform WebCaster software. WebCaster is a cloud-based platform for video and audio webcasting. WebCaster presentations feature multiple presenters on the phone, synchronized PowerPoint slides, surveys, polls, and Question and Answer. The software also enables Tetra Tech to distribute PDF versions of the slide presentation to audience members. After the live presentation, the webcast is archived so that others can watch it on demand. Tetra Tech also provides 508-compliant transcripts and closed-captioning for the webcasts to meet federal American Disabilities Act requirements. One technical challenge that had to be overcome was the development of software that would convert a phone signal into streaming Flash audio so that phone-based presenters could have their voices seamlessly integrated with a streaming visual presentation over the Web, available on virtually any browser or operating system.

Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.

Tetra Tech has been able to educate thousands of individuals on various water topics, including Clean Water Act regulations. The net effect of this effort has been a significant improvement in local knowledge about water management where it matters. At the same time, the ability to train people remotely using technology has enabled Tetra Tech to save more thousands of tons of CO2 emissions from limiting air and car travel for trainers and students.

Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.

More than 65 webcasts have been conducted as part of EPA's Watershed Academy, reaching thousands of people with the latest scientific information on topics such as watershed-based permitting, wetland loss and restoration, addressing nutrient pollution, smart growth and low-impact development, creative financing for water projects, water quality monitoring, and much more. More than 50 webcasts have been conducted as part of EPA's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Webcast series. These topics have trained federal, state, and local government staff, in addition to permittees required to follow EPA's permits and regulations in the areas of storm water, concentrated animal feeding operations, pretreatment, vessels, and aquatic pesticides. The webcasts are especially helpful to state and local water agency staff who find themselves unable to travel to conferences or take private technical coursework with their limited, and often shrinking, local budgets. "These webcasts have been a great resource for small towns with no budget for travel or time to be gone. Thanks." - Tennessee. "This was my first webcast. I learned a great deal of information that will be extremely helpful in getting my program up and running. The videos were very useful and should be included in future sessions. More webcasts would be great. This is a wonderful way to learn about new rules, regs, programs, and resources without having to travel to attend training." - Washington.

