CSAC Challenge Awards Submission

Overview: The County of Monterey Treasurer-Tax Collector launched Bixby, an AI chatbot, to provide multilingual information and support to over 439,000 residents.

Challenge: The Treasurer-Tax Collector's office faced two key challenges prompting it to seek out this solution:

1. *High Volume of Routine Inquiries:* The office often deals with many routine questions related to property taxes, payment options, and due dates.

2. *Limited Accessibility and Convenience:* Working residents from various cities and unincorporated areas of the county's 3,771 square miles may have limited access to the physical office in Salinas during its weekday hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Solution: The implementation of Bixby in March, 2024 provided an innovative solution that has enhanced efficiency and accessibility by allowing customers to receive immediate, accurate responses to their inquiries at anytime from anywhere with an internet connection.

Innovation: Implementing a chatbot within the County of Monterey Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office is innovative for several reasons:

*   *Enhanced Accessibility:* Traditional offices are often bound by limited hours and physical locations. Bixby offers 24/7 accessibility, allowing residents to get information and support anytime, without being constrained by office hours or needing to visit in person. This aligns with modern expectations for digital convenience and accessibility with little to no wait time.

*   *Personalized Assistance:* Bixby can provide personalized responses based on user data, interactions, website content, and a customized knowledgebase.

*   *Multilingual Support:* Bixby can communicate in over 70 languages, breaking down language barriers and ensuring that all residents, regardless of their primary language, can access critical information and services.

*   *Real-time Data and Insights:* Using a chatbot dashboard, the department can collect and analyze interaction data, providing valuable insights into common questions, service gaps, and user needs. This real-time feedback helps the office make data-driven decisions to enhance services and address recurring issues more effectively.

- *Cost Efficiency:* By automating routine interactions and reducing the need for extensive staffing to handle basic inquiries, Bixby leads to cost savings. This allows resources to be reallocated towards more strategic or specialized tasks within the Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office.

Results: Since its launch, Bixby has engaged with over 344 residents. Over 503 communications have been provided without human intervention simply by using information accessible via the department's newly redesigned website. By providing immediate, accurate answers to inquiries, Bixby has alleviated the need for residents to make phone calls or spend time navigating the website themselves. This streamlined access has not only improved user satisfaction but also demonstrated the chatbot's effectiveness in addressing common questions and issues.

Replicability: The implementation of a chatbot in other county departments is highly replicable given the right conditions, staff resources, and planning. Several factors point to its replicability:

- *Standardization of Services:* Many offices statewide handle routine inquiries and administrative tasks like those managed by the Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office. If these tasks are standardized and predictable, a chatbot could be effectively adopted to handle them.

- *Integration Capabilities:* Bixby can be integrated with various departmental systems, such as databases and websites, to provide accurate and up-to-date information. If departments have compatible systems, updated websites, and staff resources to manage the initiative, the integration process can be streamlined.

- *Customization and Flexibility:* Bixby can be customized to meet the specific needs and functions of different departments. By tailoring Bixby's responses and features to the unique services of each department, the implementation can address a wide range of needs.

- *Scalability:* The underlying technology of Bixby is scalable, meaning that the same platform or framework used for one department can be expanded or modified for use in others. This scalability allows for cost-effective replication across different departments.

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Additional Materials: https://www.countyofmonterey.gov/government/departments-i-z/treasurer-tax-collector

https://vimeo.com/995523451