

## **2025 CSAC Awards Submission**

### **Government Finance, Administration & Technology**

#### **Santa Barbara County Public Works – Accident and Incident Communication System**

**Overview** – The Accident and Incident Communication System (AICS) expedites and improves the quality of information in risk management cases.

**Challenge** – Accidents and incidents can occur in the workplace despite precautions. At the Santa Barbara County Public Works Department, it would previously take upwards of four hours to receive and process an incident before sending it to the County’s Risk Management Division. Given an average of 100 incidents per year, the Department would spend well over 400 hours of staff time processing documents alone. The variety of methods staff used to report incidents also made it difficult to determine and address ongoing issues efficiently. In late 2023, Public Works and Risk Management staff created a decision tree to identify waste in the reporting process and determine how to address it.

**Solution** – The Public Works Department created a process in the software application Smartsheet for staff to notify managers and provide statements and documents using a phone or tablet right from the site of the accident. After managers and supervisors provide their comments, it is sent to the Public Works Safety Manager for final review. Smartsheet automatically populates a PDF with incident data that is sent to County Risk Management. Microsoft Power BI pulls this data from Smartsheet to create a dashboard with near real-time information for the director, deputies, and the Safety Manager to view.

**Innovation** – Many counties use big data and expensive tools for large risk management projects related to hazard mitigation and public health. AICS is innovative in how staff use cost-effective tools that are easy to learn with relatively less data to make a significant positive impact on the Department and County. The idea of AICS emerged from a process improvement class and grew as a project between the Public Works Public Information Officer and the Safety Manager. After a “soft rollout” in 2024, AICS has grown and improved as a collaboration between management and all staff. In July, AICS was converted into a template for other County departments to use.

**Results** – The project has positively impacted the safety and delivery of services to staff in many ways.

- Incident processing time has decreased from over four hours to less than one hour. This is due to a decrease in paperwork and an increase in organization and automation.
- The automation process has helped managers and supervisors take more accountability in identifying incident trends and addressing them quickly.
- Workers' Compensation cases have decreased from 33 in 2023, to 28 in 2024, to 15 (to date) in 2025.
- Incidents involving vehicles have decreased in five consecutive quarters.
- The risk manager identified an issue with eye-related claims and responded by purchasing new work goggles with a foam seal. Eye-related claims have dropped from eight in 2024 to none (to date) in 2025.
- The Safety Manager recognized a trend in slipping incidents, and she amended a policy to allow for boot vouchers to be provided sooner. Fewer slips have been reported in 2025 because more workers are using boots in better condition.

**Replicability** – As noted above, AICS was converted into a template for other County departments to use. It was adopted quickly by Public Works staff, and it is easy to use. Staff has also been able to make minor improvements as the project grows. Other data management and visualization tools can be used to make a similar product.

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**Additional Materials** — See attached decision tree, form, and dashboard example.