Getting started and making progress on your smart city journey

By Chase Berenson
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Recently, Dale Pennington, president of E Source Technology Planning and Implementation Consulting, and I had the pleasure of presenting at the Fall 2021 Smart Cities Connect Conference in Maryland. We highlighted some of the ways we're helping cities address challenges that arise when moving forward a smart city initiative.

When it comes to rolling out a smart city program, cities should focus investment resources on the technology best suited to solve their specific challenges. This ensures that you get the best return on investment. By successfully illustrating to city stakeholders—such as residents, employees, and politicians—that smart city technology is viable, your city will be better prepared to make more smart city investments in the future. But where do you begin the smart city journey?

Navigating overwhelming smart city technologies

Without knowing if a technology is the right choice for your smart city, you risk implementing technologies that the mayor deems "cool" or that a vendor has pushed on the city's IT staff even if it doesn't solve your city's pressing needs.

Many cities start and then quickly stop their smart city ventures because they're intimidated by technology selection. The choices can be overwhelming. Smart streetlights? Parking meters? Policing equipment? Air-pollution sensors? It's a lot to research. But without knowing if a technology is the right choice for your smart city, you risk implementing technologies that the mayor deems "cool" or that a vendor has pushed on the city's IT staff, even if it doesn't solve your city's pressing needs. This can be the most immediate but not the best way to implement smart city technologies.

Our panel discussion at Smart Cities Connect aimed to address this challenge as well as provide guidance on how to improve the process. Joined by Jack Hanley, founder and COO of Connected Cities Integrators (CCI), and Leonard Lightner, deputy mayor and director of community and economic development for the city of Allentown, Pennsylvania, we shared real-life examples of how Allentown is working through assessing its smart city options and eliciting citywide input to get buy-in for the

technology programs it needs to move forward with a smart city implementation.

The E Source Smart City Assessment Tool efficiently progresses smart city initiatives

The partnership between CCI and E Source has been critical in Allentown's smart city journey. The city will soon use the E Source Smart City Assessment Tool to help the initiative progress effectively. Allentown is still in the beginning stages of its smart city journey, but Leonard outlined the city's expectations and desire to use the Smart City Assessment Tool as well as how he foresees the implementation of the tool benefiting Allentown's smart city goals.

Ready for a smart city initiative?

Learn more about how we help cities assess and plan their smart city infrastructure.

The Smart City Assessment Tool is one step in a cohesive approach to smart city investments. There are many cities throughout the US and Canada that have experimented in the smart city space by piloting various technologies. Often vendors will provide pilot technologies at low cost, which is a great enticement for cities. However, a network of pilot programs doesn't lead to a successful smart city. To ensure successful city operations and avoid a "death by pilots" scenario, we recommend using the Smart City Assessment Tool as the first step in a complete smart city vision.

The E Source partnership with CCI and Allentown is proving to be effective and successful. We look forward to the triumph of Allentown's smart city implementation following the use of the Smart City Assessment Tool.

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