

King County, WA

County maximizes public access while cutting legislative costs



King County, WA is one of the largest counties in the country in terms of land area (nearly twice the land area of the state of Rhode Island). Since 2000, they have relied on Granicus to stay closely connected with their citizens by providing convenient, real-time access to legislative information about city ordinances, programs, and services. Throughout this time, King County Council has not only maximized transparency, they have transformed their legislative process. With Granicus, the county has effectively transformed paper-based workflows into a digital workflow that's easy to track and manage. It now requires less staff time and effort to introduce and process legislation. From these improvements, they have saved over \$385,000 in cumulative costs. They have also built a comprehensive web portal to keep their community informed.

“ We've been able to save up to 19 hours per week on our agenda process which translates into real dollar savings for our county. ”

- Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

Success Highlights

- Achieved over \$385,000 in cumulative savings in staff time and paper reduction
- Cut agenda production time from 20 hours to 1 hour
- Simplified legislative file creation, management, and tracking, transitioning to a completely digital workflow
- Increased accuracy and timeliness of information delivery
- Provides a convenient web portal to help their community and staff stay informed of official County Council business

Fast Facts

Agency Type: Local Government

Population: 1,916,441

Solution:

Legislative Management Suite

Active Since: 2000

Challenge

Prior to Granicus, King County relied on outdated technology such as word processing documents and index cards to manage and track legislation. As a result, researching and reporting on county ordinances required a lot of time and effort from staff, council members, and the public. Also, public access to this information never seemed to be timely or convenient enough. Here's an overview of their top obstacles:

- Collecting agenda items from committees and creating meeting agendas consumed 14-20 hours per week. It was entirely manual with a lot of duplication of effort.
- Finalizing and checking the accuracy of meeting agendas and minutes was very cumbersome. Staff had to go through many review cycles before completion which prolonged information turn-around time to the public and staff.
- Compiling and delivering copies of staff reports or fiscal notes was all done by hand.
- Encouraging citizens to attend public hearings was difficult because many live far away from the City of Seattle where these meetings are held.
- As an oversight body, reports are constantly being filed with the county, requiring a lot of extra printing, collating, and organizational efforts.
- To find legislative documents, council members and staff needed to sift through index cards and word documents to locate exactly what they were looking for, sometimes taking up to 2-3 days.

Solution

In 2000, King County partnered with Granicus to streamline their legislative process and make official County business—agendas, minutes, meetings, ordinances, and reporting—easier to capture, manage and track online. “Granicus has transitioned our legislative process into the digital age,” says Anne Norris, Clerk of the Council for King County. Here are their core solution components:

- **Agenda and minutes creation automation.** They converted their entire agenda and minutes process to an automated workflow. Drafting documents, obtaining approvals, and maintaining accuracy is systematic through templates, real-time recording, and auto-tracking.
- **Legislative management and reporting.** Legislative files, ordinance numbers, dates, and actions are captured in real-time, retained, and may be reported on instantly. “Now, legislative information such as ordinances only needs to be entered once as opposed to dozens and dozens of times,” says Norris.
- **Public hearing videos are indexed by agenda item.** Council board, and committee meeting videos are streamed live and on-demand. They are also indexed and cross-linked to their agendas and minutes to ensure specific subjects are easy to keyword search and retrieve. Not to mention, the public always has a comprehensive view into matters being deliberated.

- **Keyword searchable legislative web portal.**
Staff and the public can easily locate and track legislative information—agendas, reports, minutes, and indexed video—from a central location on the County website.

Results

Now that King County is able to manage its official business with complete transparency and efficiency, they have been able to deliver information and report results to the public and staff with greater speed and transparency than ever before. Additionally, the county is cutting costs and saving time while they work. Here's a summary of their results:

- Reduction in staff time for agenda preparation from 20 hours to 1 hour.
- Approximately \$35,000 in savings per year in staff time and paper costs, which has resulted in roughly \$385,000 in cumulative legislative savings.
- Citizen engagement levels are lighter because access to legislative information is easier than ever before—they can watch council meetings and follow the latest County Council decisions and actions instantly.
- Accuracy and timeliness of legislative information has significantly improved because everything is being processed in real-time following an automated process.

“With Granicus, we are able to submit ordinances once and track them through the legislative process. We know the information is accurate and manual effort is drastically reduced.”

- Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council