# From 'who' provides the service to 'what' citizens need

Franklin County upgrades to unified government

| **25** | **93K+** | **250** |
|---|---|---|
| websites consolidated into one | visitors to the new site in one month | feedback responses in first month |

## OVERVIEW

Franklin County's existing content management system (CMS) was aging and in need of an upgrade, which would require a complete rebuild of the county's numerous disconnected websites. This presented a strategic opportunity to rethink the county's entire digital presence around a new concept: "One Franklin County." With a shared commitment to government experience (GX), Franklin County established a partnership with Granicus to embark on a far-reaching digital overhaul — bringing 25 different websites from 14 different agencies into one unified, resident-focused website.

## SITUATION | CITIZEN-CENTRIC DIGITAL FRONT DOOR

County leadership recognized that its previous digital structure — which had 25 separate, disconnected agency websites with clunky navigation — was a significant source of confusion for residents. For example, a citizen looking for a marriage license would not intuitively know to navigate to the Probate Court website. To make matters worse, the outdated search functionality required an exact match — meaning if someone typed in "pet shelter," they might not receive any results, because the website used the term "animal shelter" instead.

This agency-centric model created unnecessary friction and frustration and failed to meet the public's expectations for simple, accessible digital services. In fact, research found that 47% of residents said the old website led them to trust Franklin County and its services less.

## MUST HAVE SOLUTIONS

### Service Cloud

"We're one Franklin County. Yes, there's a bunch of different elected officials; there's a bunch of different budgets; different priorities, laws, and services. But from the public's perspective, we're [all] Franklin County, so let's act like it."

– John Proffitt, Chief Digital Officer, Franklin County

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## SOLUTION | TRANSPARENCY-FOCUSED TECH

Franklin County's GX Foundry team took on a hefty project to move from a siloed online presence to a unified, citizen-centric digital front door, with the goals to:

- ⊘ **Consolidate 25 different websites** from 14 agencies into a single, intuitively designed county website.

- ⊘ **Refocus all content around public-facing services,** not agency identities.

- ⊘ **Prioritize human-centered design,** plain language, and user experience (UX) research.

Franklin County's GX Foundry team conducted meetings with each party to understand their goals and challenges and ensure the new platform would meet the needs of such a large and diverse group of stakeholders. This effort to build trust among stakeholders helped create staff champions and fostered a sense of change management through relationship management.

"It's not just about the technology," said John Proffitt, chief digital officer of Franklin County. "The people, process, and focus on change management through relationship management is what really paves the path to success."

This process was followed by Experience Center workshops, led by Granicus Experience Group (GXG) experts, that focused on journey mapping, human-centered design, and understanding the resident experience.

"We did Experience Centers based off audiences," said Sarah Gray, GX Concourse manager at Franklin County. "We had our resident services-focused agencies all together and our business services folks all together; for the first time, they really had to talk about the handoffs from one agency to another. We are a very small team, so having Granicus help us with doing research, talking to the public, and user testing was hugely helpful."

> The inclusive approach shifted the focus from "who" provides the service to "what" citizens need — organizing web content around user tasks and life events.

"When I first presented on the idea of a combined site to staff, I focused on how disjointed a user journey was for someone looking for senior meal delivery services provided by Office on Aging," said Gray. "Now all food assistance programs across agencies have a navigation landing page, and SEO allows our service to show up on the first page of Google. This improves usability immensely, and the Office on Aging consistently receives the highest amount of positive feedback on their pages."

## RESULTS | VALUES-BASED PUBLIC TRUST

The new, unified website was launched four months ahead of schedule and saw more than 93,000 visitors in just one month's time. Usage analytics through Service Cloud enables the team to make data-driven improvements to its website right away. With a feedback form on every page, the team quickly received actionable feedback from the public. Of nearly 250 early feedback responses, nearly a third were praise, while many others pointed to missing contact information or a topic near and dear to residents' hearts: dogs.

Data revealed that pages related to pets — like the "adoptable dogs" page —are the most viewed on the entire site. In conversations with animal shelter staff, the GX Foundry team learned visitors for pet-related support often ask about similar services, revealing unexpected opportunities to connect residents with broader resources on the website.

"I use that example a lot of how important user research is, how important it is to take care of the whole person, to focus on the resident first, and then build out our digital strategy from there," said Gray. "Find the biggest entry points and then build the offshoots from there for what people actually need."

Acting as a single digital hub, **Franklin County's new digital front door** breaks down departmental silos and delivers a more transparent, accessible, and user-friendly experience for residents. Proffitt and Gray advise other counties to see forced technology upgrades as a catalyst for strategic transformation and an opportunity for governments to achieve significant improvements in service delivery and public trust.

The journey doesn't end here for the Franklin County team. Working with their Experience Partner, the team continues to train users and focus on improving accessibility. Looking ahead, the GX Foundry is building the foundation for a "listening government" and educating staff on how to understand feedback and integrate it into processes to continuously improve how they serve the public.

> "You always have to have a values-based North Star when you're doing this work ... We're doing it to help people. We're doing it to help make people's lives easier, help people find the services that they need, and find services they may not even know that we offer that can help them.

– Sarah Gray, GX Concourse Manager, Franklin County

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