

# 2019 TLG Innovation Showcase Applicant

## Electronic Record Certification with Blockchain Technology

Washoe County Recorder, Nevada

*#Reality Focused, Results Driven*

Population: 446,903

### Innovation

#### Criteria:

- Initiative fundamentally changed a process, product or service (fundamental)
- OR
- Initiative builds upon existing knowledge to improve a product, process or service (incremental)
  - The initiative substantially stretched the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations.

### Describe Your Innovation

*(When and how did this innovation get started? Do also detail how the program or policy innovative, how it has changed previous processes, products, or services, and how it has substantially stretched or improved the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations.)*

Washoe County, which includes Reno, NV, remains one of the country's top wedding destinations. The Washoe County Recorder plays an important role in this process by issuing certified proof of marriage after the ceremony has taken place. This record is used for vital processes such as travelling, applying for benefits, and obtaining government issued identification. In many states, it isn't uncommon for it to take over a month from the time someone requests proof of marriage to the time they receive it. This posed a major issue to customers who needed their certificate much sooner. For example, we sometimes receive calls from someone standing on a dock unable to board their cruise ship because they just realized they're without proper documentation. This pushed us to look for new, secure, and innovative ways to provide instant service to those in need. As we explored new technologies that might allow us to expedite the process, we approached a local startup with the idea of utilizing blockchain technology to electronically certify documents as opposed to mailing embossed paper certificates. Using the Ethereum blockchain to securely store data in a public database, we can certify that electronic documents have not been changed after they left our office, a feature that wasn't possible with the traditional paper certificates. Not only did this provide a way of issuing a more secure and verifiable record, but also allowed us the ability to instantly issue through email certified proof of marriage to someone anywhere in the world within minutes of their request. This ability can make the difference between whether or not someone goes on their honeymoon or meets a deadline to apply for survivor benefits.

## Collaboration

### Criteria:

- Initiative demonstrated engaging stakeholders both internal and external.
- Initiative demonstrated high performance teaming, breaking down internal silos.
- Strategic partnerships and or community networks were developed as a result of the initiative

**In less than 200 words, what individuals or groups are considered the primary initiators of your program? How does the innovation engage stakeholders or demonstrate high performance teaming? What strategic partnerships and/or community networks, if any, were developed?**

The program started as a pilot program between the Washoe County Recorder and a local blockchain startup called Titan Seal. The pilot program provided an opportunity for local government to collaborate with an emerging technological industry in our area and explore solutions for our customers in a fiscally responsible manner. Since then, the Washoe County Recorder has collaborated with additional blockchain related companies and startups to discuss further ways in which this technology can be used in additional functions of our office, as well as our organization as a whole. The project stands as a shining example of how local government and industries can collaborate to strengthen the infrastructure, efficiency, and performance to the public we serve.

**If a private consultant was used please describe in detail their involvement, identify the consultant and/or firm and provide contact information. Maintain a 100 word maximum.**

The project started as a pilot program with Titan Seal; Phil Dhingra Founder Titan Seal, Inc. phil@titanseal.com

## Significance

### Criteria:

- Initiative addresses an area of concern for the majority of local government organizations.
- Initiative can serve as a model and replicated in other jurisdictions.

**Please describe the extent to which you believe your program or policy initiative is potentially replicable within other jurisdictions and why? To your knowledge, have any other jurisdictions or organizations established programs or implemented policies modeled specifically on this project? Please also provide verification of the replication.**

Throughout the country, governments are tasked with the responsibility to provide identification, vital records, and certified documents. In an increasingly paperless, automated, and instant-service world, it seems inevitable that all of these will soon be provided in electronic form. Electronic media, however, has the opportunity to provide either additional security, or pose greater risk, especially in terms of fraud. It's imperative that when agencies are presented with an electronic form of documentation, they have some way to verify the source from which it came, that it has not been changed since leaving the issuing agency, and it is indeed an authentic document.

The Washoe County Recorder's use of blockchain technology to produce and certify electronic marriage certificates provides a model which any agency can use in order to create and send electronic versions of documents and identification in a secure manner. Since the launch of the pilot program in March 2018, multiple jurisdictions throughout the state are looking into similar programs, including Clark, Elko, and Nye counties.

## Effectiveness

### Criteria:

- Initiative addresses a community or organization need.
- Initiative has achieved tangible results.
- Initiative improved the organizational culture or the traditional approach to problem solving.
- Initiative has received recognition for its achievements, i.e. independent evaluation, national recognition, local press, etc.

**Please describe the most significant obstacle(s) encountered thus far by your program. How have they been dealt with? Which ones remain?**

The most significant obstacle was and continues to be the acceptance of certified, electronic documents by agencies throughout the world. The electronic marriage certificates issued by the Washoe County Recorder are in most, if not all, cases the first of its kind agencies have seen from Motor Vehicle Divisions to Social Security and Passport offices who are accustomed to paper certificates. This being the case, the Washoe County Recorder and their collaborator Titan Seal have made diligent efforts speaking at seminars and conferences around the country to educate jurisdictions worldwide on the security and validity of these documents with formidable results. Once agencies take the time to learn about this process, they most often accept it as an even more secure and service-friendly process to that which they've used for generations.

**What outcomes did this program or policy have? Could you share one or two objective measures that demonstrate these outcomes? Ultimately, how did you measure the change based on the intervention, and why do you believe in the credibility of this assessment?**

Since the pilot launch in March 2018, the Washoe County Recorder has issued over 400 electronic marriage certificates. As acceptance and education is a major part of this initiative, the Washoe County Recorder has made efforts to follow-up with the customers to whom certificates have been issued to verify their acceptance and to which agencies. To date, we have verified a 64% acceptance rate by over 70 entities in 11 states and 4 countries.

**Has the program received any press or other media coverage to date? If yes, please list the sources and briefly describe relevant coverage.**

Medium.com: Article

Mynews4.com and Fox News 4 and 11: Articles and television broadcast pieces.

thenextweb.com: Article

cryptonews.com: Article

## Presentation

### Criteria:

- Presentation will be delivered by a team.
- Presentation will be highly interactive and engaging.

## Example Social Media Post

Hear about the future of certified, electronic documents and identification using blockchain technology– The Washoe County Electronic Marriage Certificate Project.

**Please write an abstract or short description for your innovation that would make conference attendees say "Well, I need to attend this session!"**

In an increasingly paperless world where instant service is expected, jurisdictions continuously look for secure ways to facilitate electronic records and identification. Using blockchain technology, the Washoe County Recorder has successfully launched a program which allows them to issue certified, electronic marriage certificates. As opposed to embossed paper certificates and records to which we're accustomed, these certificates provide receiving agencies a way to verify that the document presented to them is authentic, that it was indeed issued by the proper agency, and that nothing on the document has been changed since issuance. Additionally, the electronic form of these records allow the Washoe County Recorder to issue a certified document within minutes to someone anywhere in the world which can make the difference in whether or not someone gets their passport in time for their honeymoon or meets a deadline to receive survivorship benefits. The pilot program, in cooperation with the Washoe County Recorder and blockchain startup Titan Seal, is a must see for anyone interested in the future of certified documentation.

**How will you make the session creative and unique?- How do you plan to be both entertaining and educational?- Include a description of how your session will facilitate group activities and/or interaction.- What will attendees be able to have as an actionable "takeaway" from the session?**

When discussing the project with other jurisdictions and members of relative industries, our primary focus is to educate others on the security, validity, and effectiveness of this process. Past presentations have included live demonstrations of what the actual process of sealing a certificate using blockchain looks like. The project also offers a unique perspective on uses of blockchain technology and encourages attendees to think outside the box when exploring solutions, even if it means having to educate a multitude of others on what your solution accomplishes. Attendees will part with actual tools they can use within their offices as well as a forward thinking perspective on government innovation.

**Anything else you would like to add?**