

**North Carolina Association of County Commissioners
2006-07 Ralph W. Ketner Employee Productivity Awards Application**

County: Mecklenburg County **Employee:** Silvio Conte **Email:** Silvio.Conte@mecklenburgcountync.gov

County Department: Residential Permitting **Employee Title:** Admin Support Coordinator

County Phone: 704-432-6735 **County Mailing Address:** 700 N. Tryon St., Charlotte NC 28202

Is this project being submitted on behalf of two or more employees? **NO** **YES**

If yes, please provide below a listing of all project employees in Number 6. Employee & title as listed above should be for lead team member.

Fair Labors Standards Act Designation: In order for your project to be eligible, you MUST indicate one of the following. If you do not know, please contact your personnel director.

EXEMPT: **NON-EXEMPT:** **BOTH (if applicable to a team):**

1.	Productivity Improvement Title:	Residential Permits Tracking System
2.	Implementation Date (must be between January 1, 2006 and December 31, 2006)	June, 2006
3.	Please describe the productivity improvement. (Please limit response to these 2 pages.)	
<p>This system is a very simple, user-friendly, yet very powerful database developed by Silvio Conte to address timing, response, accuracy, efficiency and scalability of residential building and trade permitting status. It saves employees a great deal of time and stress, and it consequently saves the County real money because of efficiencies built into the system. It also enables our call-in customers to receive concise, accurate, and quick answers to their questions regarding their permits status. When a fax or drop-off application comes in our office, the address is logged into the Tracking System, which keeps track of the date and time it was received without user intervention. Once an application is received, the permitting coordinator has two options -- to assign it for processing or forward it to zoning for zoning verification. Assignments are handled by checkmarks and combo-boxes requiring virtually no typing at all. This makes the process error-free, since it avoids typographical mistakes. The system keeps track of the date and time a permit is received, assigned, sent to zoning, received by zoning, it is sent back to permitting, and finally it is physically received by the processor for issuing the permit. The database provides a very flexible search engine that allows for searches by single or multiple strings or parts of strings. (This enhanced method will make spelling exactitude nearly irrelevant.) Once a record is retrieved, a complex algorithm analyzes and interprets the data and then provides the user with a status report in concise and plain English (e.g., "The permit was received by Silvio Conte on 6/22/06 at 9:30 a.m."). Users can add comments to any record, if they wish to, in order to clarify procedures or processing delays (e.g., "Contractor license expired, left message for customer on 6/25/06"). Unlike the logbook used in the past, the database can be accessed by employees in the entire organization, simultaneously and from their own computers. Furthermore, newly entered records are immediately retrievable by anyone, and can be sorted by a number of criteria. Management reports can quickly spot problematic record delays and take immediate action. Statistical analyses can also be run to analyze process time and who did what and when. Considering the challenges presented by the legacy system and saving to the county, this project is well worthy of special recognition.</p>		

4. Please describe why this project was initiated or what problem it addressed:

The first spark of this idea took place when Silvio, a newly employee in our department, first took notice of inefficiencies in our legacy system. However, because of a heavy workload, implementation of the plan was postponed several times. Finally, by taking the initiative, Silvio developed and launched the database on June 12, 2006. With the legacy system, acknowledging the receipt and then track faxes and drop-off applications for the day-to-day work was a complicated, inefficient and time consuming matter. The permit used to be logged into a logbook, and then a second and third page (retyping the same addresses over and over again) were required to keep track of permits sent to the zoning department or assigned to be processed. The logbook itself was also quickly getting thicker and thicker, making a manual search cumbersome, very time consuming, and at times frustrating. Because of its many pages flipping back and forth, it was very easy to miss the address searched for, thus requiring a search from the beginning. Often, several people had to use the logbook at the same time, forcing someone to wait while the other person conducted research. Sometimes, too, the book was misplaced and difficult to find. Frequently, a customer calling in was placed on hold for an extended time, since someone needed to walk to the logbook to begin searching for an answer. Indeed, the facilitator often had to go back and forth, from logbook to telephone, in order to ask additional questions to the customer to facilitate the search (e.g., the date the fax was sent, the exact spelling of the street name, etc.). Not surprisingly, customers often tired of waiting and holding the line and so hung up the phone. This would make the facilitator, who had spent a good deal of time researching for the customer, very frustrated as well. And even if the research was successful, the logbook could not provide an accurate, up-to-the- minute status of the application. For example, a permit could have been assigned to a facilitator but not yet physically received by the facilitator. Also, there was no way to know if a permit was actually received by the department until the entire list was typed and placed in the logbook for everyone to see.

5. Please quantify the improvement's results in terms of cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of services provided.

(Please indicate what resources were used to achieve your results, and what was done with the time savings, if any accrued).

In short, the idea for and implementation of this project was above and beyond what is expected from Silvio, who is a Permit Facilitator and not a programmer in our department. Silvio has used his own personal knowledge, experience, resources, and time to design this database. Normally, the development of databases requires a lot of investment in time and money. However, Silvio was quick to develop the system and did not use any County money to purchase additional software, because he used existing resources already available to the County. Factoring \$36,000 in actual time saved by employees in time spent in doing researches (at least one hour a day per employee), 5 Millions in miss-production/customer saving and a minimum of one-time \$100,000 in software licensing, development, consulting, and support, the total **annual** saving is conservatively estimate to be over **\$5,000,000** while providing better customer service and less burden on staff.

6. Please provide any other descriptive information you would like to be considered by the review committee.

County Manager's Name:	Harry L. Jones, Sr.	Supervisor's Name:	Johnnie Waldo – Core Process Manager
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Return by June 15, 2007 via email to ncacc@ncacc.org.