Title of Best Practice: "Remote Payment Processing through R.A.T.E."

Description of Best Practice: Tax Collector Rhonda Skipper and staff implemented the R.A.T.E. (Remote Area Tax Express) program in 2006. The purpose of the program is to go into the community and answer tax questions and collect payments. Due to Walton County's size, it was the desire of Mrs. Skipper to take the Tax Collector's Office to the people during the discount period when individuals benefit most from making payment and to also make the process of tax collection more convenient for customers.

The R.A.T.E. program provides another payment option to the customer allowing the Tax Collector's Office to connect with tax payers and citizens in their communities. During the high transaction volume months of November and March, representatives of the Tax Collector's office travel to strategic locations throughout the county to meet tax payers where they are to serve them in their communities. At these locations customers can pay property tax bills as well as ask questions they may have concerning their property or other services the Tax Collector's office provides. Customer payments are processed immediately into the payment processing software through virtual desktop access. With a simple wireless internet connection and mobile device (laptop, iPad, ect.), payments are recorded and an email receipt can be provided. This practice has proven to be very beneficial to the citizens of Walton County who prefer a face-to-face transaction and are no longer required to make inconvenient trips to the county courthouse.

Results: As a result of the implementation of this best practice, lobby traffic has been reduced as customers preferring in person transactions are served remotely. The number of customers served and the total collected amounts have varied but overall have increased over the last eight years since the program's launch. Customer satisfaction and public perception are also enhanced through the addition of this service.

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Customers Served	324	165	173	146	162
Amounts Collected	349,376	211,692	246,898	182,521	179,664

Application: This best practice can be utilized by other service organizations desiring to reduce office traffic and serve customers at a more convenient location for them. In order to implement, an organization would need to thoroughly plan the event by determining the locations for which customers can be best served remotely, acquiring the resources necessary for the remote access payment processing and communicating the remote service events to the public.