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## **Cook County Assessor's Appeal System Wins Local IT Innovation of the Year Award** Assessor's Office Recognized for Innovative Technology Applications

**Cook County** – The Cook County Assessor's Office (CCAO) received the *Local IT Innovation of the Year Award* for the implementation of SmartFile, a user-friendly platform that allows property owners to file assessment appeals entirely online. The innovative, online filing system received this recognition from [StateScoop](#), an organization that brings together information technology leaders from across government, academia, and industry to exchange best practices.

"This is a huge milestone toward the full modernization of our office. We launched the online appeal system just prior to Illinois' Stay at Home order due to COVID-19," Assessor Kaegi said. "The online launch of SmartFile ensured the safety of the public and our employees while maintaining a high level of service."

Since February 2020, the office has processed 92,051 appeals via SmartFile, with a completion rate of 89.97%. The SmartFile application is also part of larger scale project to enhance the technology used by the CCAO that will streamline administrative processes for staff and taxpayers.

"This project was a huge undertaking and required the buy-in of multiple departments within Cook County. We have provided tutorials on social media, hosted live sessions that walk users through the process, and developed detailed FAQs," said Mirella Villafuerte, who leads the CCAO's SmartFile implementation as its director of special projects.



The CCAO's Community Outreach Department also conducted a series of virtual seminars and in-person outreaches this year to assist property owners with both the exemption and appeal process.

"Our office proactively teamed up with local elected officials across the county to assist constituents in historically underserved areas and assisted them in filing appeals," Assessor Kaegi said.

Additionally, the CCAO hired Clarity Partners, LLC to assist with redesigning its website with a more user-friendly interface that went live in February 2020. Earlier this year, Clarity and the CCAO's website received a designation as a *Silver Winner of the 2020 W3 Awards* and were named the 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner for the *2020 Vega Digital Arcturus Award*. Lastly, the CCAO's Real Property Income and Expense (RPIE) application received 3<sup>rd</sup> place for the *2020 Vega Digital Arcturus Award*. The RPIE application, *developed by Clarity*, is, an online tool that collects data from commercial property owners resulting in more accurate assessments.