FUTURE OF CIVIC APPS

THE POWER OF ENGAGING YOUR COMMUNITY

by Karolyn Hart

inspirehub™

TECHNOLOGIES

engage | elevate | energize

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Who needs this White Paper?

This White Paper is for you if you are looking for answers to these questions:

- How can my community afford an app?
- What is the latest technology in apps?
- What is a Progressive Web App?
- How can Progressive Web Apps help my community?
- What are the benefits of Progressive Web Apps?
- What success have other communities had with Progressive Web Apps?
- How can this app help me with my compliance requirements?
- How can I better engage my residents?

Everything You MUST Know Right Now.

No time to read this paper? No problem. Print this page and you will have 80% of what you need. Working in civic engagement means that you have to constantly find a way to do more with less and that includes less budget, less resources, and less time.

If you are wondering whether or not an app could help your community— it can! Here are the main points of everything you need to know at a high-level. The rest of this paper will go into detail.

- **The App Landscape Has Radically Shifted**
Using a software program once involved installing that application (usually off of a CD or Disk) and then it would run off that computer. The maturation of the internet (specifically its stability) and the speed of hardware means that we now run most of our programs through our browsers and take it for granted. The same shift has been happening for mobile phones. The stability of cell coverage, access to the internet, and sophistication of phones has made Progressive Web Apps (PWAs) a viable reality. This means you don't have to "install" an app on your phone to have it work. Big technology giants including Google, Microsoft, Opera, and Mozilla have all stated that Progressive Web Apps (not Native) are the future. Even Apple has made steps towards this direction and web apps work on every type of hardware: computer, laptop, and all mobile devices.

- **Civic Mobile Engagement Tools are Essential**
Chances are you checked your mobile phone before you even brushed your teeth this morning. Your residents are the same way. Engaging them via mobile will increase your community engagement. The IHUBApp comes with a suite of tools that include event management, volunteer recruitment, instant polls and surveys, and tools

to help with capital fundraising programs. It was designed and built by those with experience in community and economic development.

- **Using Web Apps is NOT New for Government**
Britain's [Government Digital Service banned government built-native apps](#) to serve their constituents back in 2012 due to the cost associated with the building of native apps and the ongoing costs of maintenance. This was *before* Progressive Web App technology was an option. The result? They estimate they saved US$8.2bn over four years. Progressive Web App technology can deliver on the community engagement services you need for a fraction of the cost.

- **Progressive Web Apps Work Offline**
PWA Technology is not the same as Native Apps nor are they simply a website. The secret is in something called the Service Worker which runs in the background. The more your users interact with the app the more of the app is made available even when there is no internet connection. It "progressively" becomes an app as it earns the trust of your users.
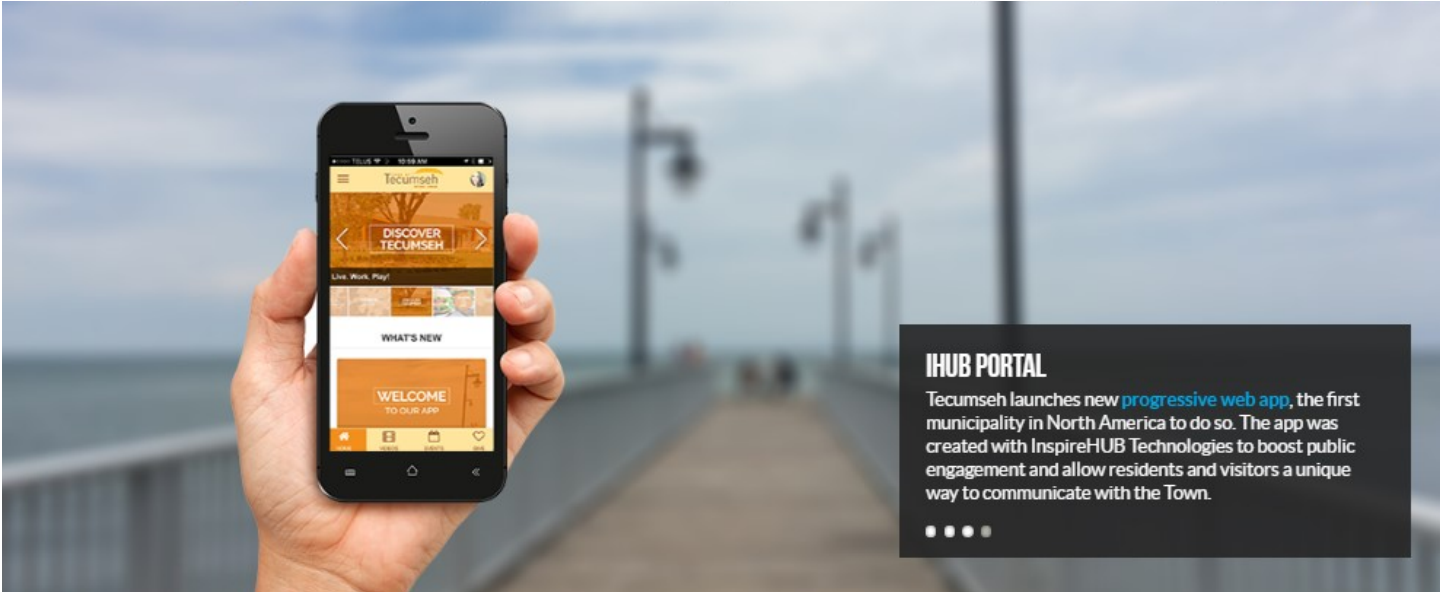
- **The IHUBApp Helps with Compliance**
The W3C Accessibility Standards is something that many communities around the world are either trying to meet or must meet based on local legislation requirements. By using the IHUBApp (that costs a fraction of a website overhaul) you can meet your compliance requirements.

- **You can have an app for a fraction of the cost!**
Progressive Web Apps cost a fraction of native apps and provide double the engagement. Your community can finally afford its own app!

Case Study: Town of Tecumseh

IHUB PORTAL

Tecumseh launches new progressive web app, the first municipality in North America to do so. The app was created with InspireHUB Technologies to boost public engagement and allow residents and visitors a unique way to communicate with the Town.

"The Town of Tecumseh is always looking at new ways to reach residents and continue to communicate the work we do for them. We have three main priorities to engage our residents: communication, compliance, and reach. When we learned about the IHUBApp and saw that residents controlled their app experience by joining the channels they are interested in, we felt that was a game changer. Using the latest technology means we can make the app available to anyone who has a browser. More residents can participate in this experience rather than those with certain phones."

Gary McNamara
Mayor of Town of Tecumseh

Overview
The Town of Tecumseh was seeking to better engage residents both in terms of frequency and personal relevance.

Challenges
Traditional methods of communicating with residents including a newsletter and updates on the town website were not providing the level of engagement they desired. They wished for residents, elected officials, and town administration to identify what was personally relevant to them and to be able to engage with the community in those interest areas.

How IHUBApp Helped
The IHUBApp's proprietary Unlimited Content Channels systems allowed administration the flexibility of creating channels that are meaningful to their community (including a channel for every elected official as an example), so when residents join the channels they can be instantly notified of updates. Additionally, administration can change and manage channels as frequently as they wish.

Case Study: Town of Tecumseh

Increasing Community Engagement
The IHUBApp comes standard with an engagement tool suite that includes automated newsletters, in-app messaging, event management, volunteer recruitment, fundraising and donation management, as well as polls and surveys. All posts provide a comments section that is set to be moderated by the app's administrators. This gives you total control over what content appears on the app.

Engagement and Compliance
One of the challenges facing many Elected Officials is how they engage with residents online. When election season arrives they must shut down their existing social media accounts (often where they have been conducting town business) and start new ones for election. By creating individual channels for use by each Elected Official, the app provides a place for residents to communicate with their representative on town business. This provides a clear distinction and creates less confusion for residents.

The IHUBApp is also compliant with W3C Accessibility standards allowing communities to provide accessibility to all its residents using the latest technology.

Results and Future Plans
Within three hours of launching, the Tecumseh App had received 1444 views and was shared 47 times. Engagement plans include the use of the app for public forums and to poll residents on community interests.

Tony Haddad, CAO of Town of Tecumseh explains there were two features that his Town Administration found compelling as it pertained to communication and compliance.

"The first feature that drew us to the IHUBApp was the Automated Newsletter Digest. Communication is very important and our app builds a digest based on what channels our residents join and also lets them determine how often they are notified so that communications are timely.

The second feature of the app was that it allows us the flexibility to give every elected official their own channel directly into their wards. Now, Councillors have a tool to engage with their residents while maintaining compliance with the Municipal Act during election season.

Our Councillors all felt this was a strength and are looking forward to using this tool."

To experience the Tecumseh app:
www.tecumsehapp.ca

Tecumseh in the Press:
Read the headlines now!

"Getting the opportunity to use this technology first right out of the gate has been exciting for us. We are able to launch a new communications tool that provides better access for users on the go. In the first month we've had it operating we have seen very positive support and we're looking forward to developing it further and engaging the community on a different platform."
LESLEY RACICOT, MANAGER STRATEGIC INITIATIVES TOWN OF TECUMSEH

Why Progressive Web Apps are right for your community!

1. **Cost**
   The cost to create and maintain a native app is significant. The UK estimates it saved US$8.2bn over 4 years by NOT using native apps.
   Read: [Why Britain banned mobile (native) apps](#)

2. **Acquiring Users**
   Just because you have an app does not mean people will use what you have created. If you do build a native app the numbers show you are guaranteed to decrease your ability to acquire users.
   Read: [The surprising tradeoff at the center of the question to build a Native or Web App](#)

3. **Increased Engagement**
   Those organizations that are using PWA Technology are seeing their engagement levels double.
   Read and Watch: [Opening Keynote (Progressive Web App Summit 2016)](#)

4. **Compliance & Offline Access**
   PWAs are based on a recent W3C specification called service workers that allows the app to be accessed when offline.
   Read: [How the Smarter Web will rescue apps](#)

5. **Better User Experience**
   On average, an app loses 20% of its users for every step between the user's first contact with the app and starting to use it. PWA removes steps, uses less memory on phones than native apps, and are proven to use less data.
   Read: [A Beginner's Guide to Progressive Web Apps](#)
   Read: [Why Google Thinks You Should Start Building Progressive Web Apps](#)

DEFINITIONS

APP

Noun: *app; plural noun: apps*
An application, typically a small, specialized program downloaded onto mobile devices. (dictionary.com)

PROGRESSIVE WEB APP

An application program that runs via a mobile web-browser to render the app and utilizes a Service Worker that allows the app to be accessed offline. PWAs are accessible via any hardware device utilizing a browser.

NATIVE APP

An application that has been designed on a particular platform or mobile device. Native apps that are available to download exclusively through "App Stores," must be custom developed for each unique device and are not universally available.

HYBRID APP

An application program that combines the technology of a web app within a native app container. Hybrid apps, like native apps, are available to download exclusively through "App Stores".

What is a Progressive Web App?

The following transcript has been modified from the original video. Click the image on the right to watch.

Hello! Karolyn Hart, Chief Operating Officer of InspireHUB Technologies and the brand ambassador for @prowebapps on Twitter. Very excited to share with you that we recently we launched the very first Progressive Web App for a community in North America and because of that launch we are getting a lot of really great questions coming in so I wanted to put together a short video that explains what a Progressive Web App is and what it is not.

Just before I jump into that a very brief history lesson. Once upon a time in order to get any software application working on your computer you actually had to install that and then over time we evolved to something that we take for granted today; that our computers are browser based. Well, the exact evolution is now happening in mobile.

The interesting thing is that this is so bleeding edge that even some people that are in technology are just learning about it now, but by watching this video you are really one of the early adopters!

So very, very quickly let's talk about what a Progressive Web App is and how it is different than some of the other technologies that are out there. First of all, a Progressive Web App is not a Native App. You don't have to go into a play store to download it. Just like the software install went away that same transition is now happening with apps.

It's also not a website. It's not a website with responsive design and it's also not just a mobile optimized website which confuses some people. The real difference ~~is~~ between a Progressive Web App and all those other technologies is something that is called the Service Worker. The Service Worker is a piece of technology that runs behind the scenes of Progressive Web Apps and the more that you interact with the Progressive Web App through the browser the more of it becomes available offline.

Watch the video or read the transcript below!

InspireHUB: What is a Progressive Web App? with Karolyn Hart

That offline-first piece is the key differentiator between Progressive Web Apps and all the other technologies on the market.

How new is this technology? It's extremely new. The very first Progressive Web App Summit was just held at the end of June and the industry giants that were there included companies like Google, Microsoft, Mozilla and Opera. So there is a lot of great and exciting things going on with this brand new technology.

If you have questions or if you would like some more reading materials you can email me at coo@inspirehub.com and my team and I would be delighted to reply. I'm also going to put some links down below for your reference and we look forward to talking with you! - Karolyn

Some reference points:
Responsive Design and Mobile Optimized are not the same. In fact, Google search does not see responsive design as a mobile ranking benefit. Old news for some but read here if you missed out: https://searchenginewatch.com/sew/how-to/2398591/-mobilegeddon-is-coming-on-april-21-are-you-ready

Follow me on Twitter:

@karolynhart
@inspire_hub
@prowebapps

The Benefits of Progressive Web Apps

The benefits of Progressive Web Apps include:

- **Less Cost.** They cost far less to create and maintain than native apps.
- **Less Data.** They use significantly less data and memory.
- **Offline First.** They are available even when the user's phone is offline.
- **Instant Access.** They are made instantly available through websites as opposed to 'stores' making them more widely accessible.
- **Universal Access.** They can be used universally across all hardware devices.
- **Safer.** They are viewed as "safer" as users don't have to make a "heavyweight" choice up-front and sign-up for something they didn't want through a downloaded app.
- **More Engaging.** Users view their web apps as more engaging because as the user interacts with the Progressive Web App more of that app becomes available offline. In this way, users view the app has having "earned the right" to be added to their home screen and are more likely to engage.

Good News! The IHUBApp is already using this latest Progressive Web App technology.

We've built the IHUBApp to be so simple that even the least technologically savvy person can use it, but behind the scenes it is an engagement rocket engine!

The IHUBApp is...

- an **enterprise-grade solution** that includes sophisticated monitoring.

- a robust messaging app that allows **unlimited communication channels** (both private and public) and direct messaging for individuals and groups.

- a **hub for all your engagement tools** including:

⇒ an **event management suite** that allows you to create events (with paid or free ticketing), then quickly communicate about that event to your attendees!

⇒ a **survey and polling app** that allows you to pre-schedule or create real-time polls and surveys to discover exactly what your audience is thinking on any topic you choose.

⇒ a **volunteer engagement tool** that helps you promote volunteer opportunities; allowing organizers to easily manage and communicate directly with those volunteers before, during and after the event!

What is White-Labeling?

A white-label product or service is a product or service produced by one company (ex. InspireHUB) that others can rebrand with the name of their own organization.

CLICK HERE
VIEW IHUBAPP PRICING NOW

The Future is Engagement

Mobile phones arrived before the Internet. When the Internet arrived, the notion that the mobile phone would intricately connect with the Internet seemed like science fiction, but the evolution of technology made it a reality.

Today, wearable technology continues to alter our communication options as we continue to shrink the sizes of our mobile screens, and our appetite for snackable content increases.

In 2013, advertisers were excited by the prospect of the burgeoning mobile market. In 2016 and beyond they are struggling to respond to emerging technologies such as malvertising and mobile ad blockers.

The future is engagement. If the invention of mobile ad blocker apps has taught us anything, it is that the audience is fatigued and they *will* find ways to block your messaging.

CONTENT IS NOT ENOUGH

In 2013, InspireHUB introduced the idea that just because you build an app does not mean you will gain an audience anymore than building a website will guarantee you traffic. As we entered 2016, we taught "Content is not King rather story is King". At the end of 2016, we now understand that while story is King, utilitarian tools rule them all. This understanding makes the difference for organizations, advertisers and anyone who needs to gain the attention of a group of people.

ATTENTION IS NOT ENOUGH

Gaining the attention of your audience is a first step, but if you cannot truly ENGAGE them in an experience then you will lose them. This is why practical tools that allow users to **DO** something will take your engagement to a new level. It is telling a story that makes the reader emotionally engaged. It is creating an experience within your organization that motivates employees to give their very best. It is providing the tools to do something that puts these elements into action. It is taking all your strategies and plans and revisiting them with the individual and *their* goals in mind, rather than trying to force feed them your company goals.

PERSONAL RELEVANCE REIGNS

Another transition for those seeking to engage is the understanding that *niche marketing* is no longer enough. *Personalization not customization* is about what is relevant to the individual—not the organization and is now needed in order to create effective engagement.

> **"If the invention of mobile ad blocker apps has taught us anything, it is that the audience is fatigued and they *will* find ways to block your messaging."**
> **- Karolyn Hart**

Niche marketing focuses on a sub-market group and explains how the product or service meets the needs of that group. Personal relevance allows the individual to explore what is important to them which can differ from the group in which they belong.

What this means is that you will need to have unlimited channels that allows individuals to select when, where and how you are allowed to interact with them.

It also means having the ability to constantly have a variety of feedback mechanisms including detailed analytics, polls, comments, rankings etc.

TIMELINE

LATE 2013
Wired magazine introduces idea of "web apps".
READ NOW

AUGUST 2014
Research shows average user downloads ZERO apps monthly.
READ NOW

JANUARY 2015
83% of apps in app stores are "zombies".
READ NOW

MARCH 2015
Google decides that responsive web design is no longer a ranking benefit.
READ NOW

APRIL 2015
Push notifications now available on web apps
READ NOW

OCTOBER 2015
Google launches Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) project.
READ NOW

SPRING 2016
Progressive Web Apps begin to be socialized
READ NOW

JUNE 2016
First annual PWA Summit held with Google, Opera, Microsoft, Mozilla in attendance.
READ & WATCH

JULY 2016
Microsoft officially endorses PWAs.
READ NOW

AUGUST 2016
InspireHUB makes history by launching the first PWA to be used by a city in North America.
READ NOW

2015: The Year the App Landscape Shifted

In 2015, there were several moments of significance that changed the landscape for mobile apps.

In March 2015, Google announced that they would be enabling push notifications on the web via Chrome. At the time, push notifications were critical to making web apps competitive.

This was followed by another major change on April 21, when Google made changes to their search algorithm. One of the changes implemented by Google was that responsive design would not have a ranking benefit and placed the emphasis on mobile-friendliness on the page level. This had significant implications, as having an optimized web-site was no longer "enough".

In October 2015, Google announced a project that would have serious implications for the digital economy: the Accelerated Mobile Pages Project (AMP) was significant because it aimed to *dramatically* improve the performance of the mobile web. The changes to this new technology would include the ability to "stream" application functionality without requiring the user to download the traditional heavy structure of a native app.

By December 2015, a significant shift in attitude towards "native apps" happened. For the first time, people start to view native apps and the install process from a play store as cumbersome.

In late 2016, Progressive Web Apps are now the future and allows owners of apps more flexibility and power. Instead of spending their energies struggling with developers and endless updates, energies can be put toward focusing on the engagement of their end users.

You may need the IHUBApp if...

√ You have a need for **multiple communication channels** to speak with your different audience groups.

√ You are interested in **leveraging the power of mobile** across all devices.

√ You are looking for training that will **increase the engagement** for your organization.

√ You need to **build meaningful relationships** with your audience, staff, constituents or supporters.

√ You need a mechanism that allows you to **understand the individual interests** of your audience.

√ You require a **powerful event management tool** that will help you save time.

√ You need a way to distribute your engagement activities with **varying levels of security and permission**.

√ Your staff and volunteers need **practical training** in engagement best-practices.

√ You need a way to streamline and **simplify your communications.**

Do You Really Need a Web App?
Evaluating Your Community's App Needs

Here's a quick survey tool to determine if a web app will meet your organization's mobile communication needs:

☐ YES ☐ NO   1. The majority of those we wish to engage have mobile phones.

☐ YES ☐ NO   2. Our organization has found itself struggling with engagement.

☐ YES ☐ NO   3. Maintaining strong relationships with residents is key to the future of building a vibrant and healthy future for our community.

☐ YES ☐ NO   4. Gaining a wider awareness for our community is essential.

☐ YES ☐ NO   5. Making it easier for people to donate to capital campaigns is a top priority.

☐ YES ☐ NO   6. Understanding exactly what motivates someone to engage with our organization would be beneficial.

☐ YES ☐ NO   7. Being able to engage attendees during specific events to discover opinion would help in future planning.

☐ YES ☐ NO   8. The ability to collect and manage real-time user data would provide us with invaluable insight.

☐ YES ☐ NO   9. We prefer an app that will work universally across all digital devices.

☐ YES ☐ NO   10. Making it easier for people to engage and interact with our organization is crucial.

What's your score? If you answered 'yes" to the majority of the questions than a web app is likely a consideration for your organization!

Contact us today at **1.855.355.4482** or
Email us at empowerme@inspirehub.com to learn more!

5 Reasons Communities Love IHUBApp

1. Compliance with Accessibility Standards
The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is an international community that has established web standards in the development of online applications. The standards, established around accessibility, have even been written into law by states and provinces in Canada, Australia and the US. The IHUBApp is W3C Compliant.

Read:

- https://www.w3.org/standards/
- https://www.w3.org/Consortium/
- https://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility

2. Urgent Notices
When an emergency of any kind happens within your community the ability to notify your residents is critical. The feature allows the Administrator or Owner of the app the ability to push a message to every user of the app that is flagged as an "Urgent Notice" that informs them via the app and instantly via their email.

From highway shutdowns due to weather to natural disasters to amber alerts this is a great feature for communities to keep their residents informed. Users are provided the option of leaving the Urgent Notice Channel and rejoining later if they desire. They can also decide to opt out of email notifications under their profile.

Read:

- How PWA Technology helped my community following a natural disaster.

3. Automated Newsletter Digest
Creating printed newsletters is a time-consuming and costly exercise that delivers information well after something has occurred. The IHUBApp provides a daily and weekly Automated Newsletter Digest based on the content posted into the app. The digest is personalized to the user based on what channels they have joined. Finally, there is a way to personalize updates to every one of your residents.

4. Moderating of Content
The *Upload Your Story* feature available through the IHUBApp allows anyone to submit content to be moderated and shared through your app. Users must agree to the Terms of Use before uploading. This provides your organization with the necessary media release and ownership of all content submitted. The ability to seek content and stories from anyone within your community allows you to create a more engaging community experience from a wider body of contributors.

5. Compliance during Election Season
This is key for civic governments! Elected Officials must comply with directions on how they engage with their constituents during election season. Resources used to conduct official business during their term are not allowed to be utilized during election season. For those using social media to conduct business this requires dissolving old pages and starting new ones to be in compliance. With the IHUBApp each Elected Official can have their own channel for conducting official business and leave their social media accounts to be separate entities. During election season, the Administrator of the app can 'suspend' the channel and then easily activate it after the voting results are revealed.

Save time and **money** with *your* IHUBApp

The simplest way to explain the value of our pricing is to send you to a third-party company that has their own calculator for what it will cost to build an app. Go to the Third-Party Calculator Now. We completed their calculator using the following criteria and their total to "do-it-yourself" came in at $514,204 or if you were to use this development group it would only cost $247,302. Click here for google search results.

How Is It Possible?
We've built an enterprise-grade platform that allows us to help you quickly create a custom white-labeled web app just for you! We're looking to disrupt how the market approaches the development of web apps and want to make it accessible for organizations of ALL sizes to have a world-class app experience.

What to Ask the Other Guys
Whether you go with InspireHUB or not, if you are in the market to build an app be sure to ask about the following (yes, we take care of all this)...

- **Evergreen Costs:** when you build Native Apps every time the provider updates their operating system your app will need to be refreshed. Be sure to ask what the ongoing costs will be to keep the app you are getting built compliant.
- **Feature Phones:** feature phones are beginning to dominate markets and smartphone growth is starting to slow. Inquire about how those who are not using Apple or Android phones will be able to access your app.
- **App Engagement:** if you are currently struggling with engagement building an app will not be a silver bullet that will rescue your engagement. Inquire about their plans to help you identify content that is meaningful to your specific audience and what will actually drive engagement. (Hint: content is not enough.)

About InspireHUB Technologies

WHAT WE DO:
REVOLUTIONIZE ENGAGEMENT.

InspireHUB Technologies is the creator of the IHUBApp—A Thousand Apps in One™. The latest in Progressive Web App Technology delivers an exceptional engagement experience (powered by UNLIMITED content channels) for a fraction of the cost of native apps.

The IHUBApp provides its own proprietary:
- Content management dashboard so easy to use that many users require no training to begin posting content to their app,
- Event management platform to help your community engage residents on everything from official meetings, festivals and public forums that also includes volunteer recruitment,
- Polls and survey tools to engage your residents in real-time, and
- Fundraising and donation management to assist with your capital campaigns.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karolyn Hart | Chief Operating Officer
InspireHUB Inc.

Karolyn's twenty year career has spanned multiple industries. She has overseen large-scale technology projects, launched a national television show, and is an award-winning economic developer who holds the distinction of being the first female appointed executive to one of Canada's oldest economic development agencies.

Karolyn oversees InspireHUB's growth efforts via marketing, communications, sales, licensing and operations. She is most inspired by those people who dedicate themselves to helping the vulnerable and showing them their inherent value.

ABOUT INSPIREHUB

InspireHUB Technologies offers custom-branded enterprise-grade progressive web apps that provide a suite of tools to increase engagement for all audiences (using unlimited content channels) on mobile and tablet devices. InspireHUB can be found on the web at www.inspirehub.com

VIEW IHUBAPP PRICING NOW FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

NEXT STEPS

This guide is only the first step to understanding how your organization could benefit from an app today!
To find out how the InspireHUB Mobile Engagement Platform can meet your engagement needs please contact:

Karolyn Hart
empowerme@inspirehub.com
1.855.355.4482