



Campbell County

Performance Improvement Teams and Employee-Driven,

Long-Term Planning:

Enhancing the Planning Process through Internal Cooperation

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Synopsis: In 1999 Campbell County took innovative steps to work toward becoming a High Performance Organization, based on the University of Virginia's Leading, Educating, and Development (LEAD) model. Fundamentally rooted in the principles of democracy and energized with creative thinking, this process established a set of employee-led teams called Performance Improvement Teams (PITs). This parallel organization created a venue through which staff at all levels of service could collaborate equally, to address the issues, problems, and future planning which affect all county citizens, staff and stakeholders. Over the past eleven years, this process has grown into a highly successful program which is equally as beneficial to the organization as it is to the employees and local citizens.

A Leadership Team, comprised of department heads, the County Administrator, and the County Attorney, identifies issues and areas within the organization where improvements could be made, and channels these issues to one of the ten established Performance Improvement Teams. These inter-departmental, employee-led teams brainstorm ideas, seek more efficient and cost-saving means of service, and report back ideas and suggestions to be implemented upon approval by the Leadership Team, or incorporated into the County's yearly planning and budgeting process. Staff members from all departments are given the opportunity to volunteer for service on a team, rating their team preference for selection. Service on these teams is incorporated into participating staff members' work plans and assessed in the employee evaluation process to recognize those who demonstrate leadership and active participation in the program.

To further enable employees to be involved with long-term planning, a four-tiered, employee-driven, planning mechanism has been established to allow employees, organizational leaders, and elected officials an opportunity to collaborate on the future direction of the locality. Employees and their respective department leaders cooperate, yearly, to list the major projects to be carried out over a three to ten year period. Detailed objectives are created for each project or process, identifying key staff responsibilities, hours needed for completion, anticipated budget requests for the project/process, and a detailed time frame for implementation. These are then submitted during the budget process for Board of Supervisors approval and funding allocations. This system not only gives employees a valuable insight and buy-in into the planning and budgeting process, but likewise brings employee and administration together in a common goal of solving issues cooperatively. Campbell County's approach to this employee-driven organizational model has truly proven to be a highly valuable, efficient and sustainable program for effective problem solving, budgeting, and long-term planning for the locality.

Statement of Problem/Challenge:

Providing governmental services, using a collaborative, professional, and value-driven approach, requires a tremendous amount of planning, proper budgeting, and numerous streamlined processes to meet citizens' needs on a daily basis. In the past, decisions as to how these elements were applied throughout the organization came from the upper levels of management and filtered down to employees through various forms of communication; not through active participation in the process. Over the years, departments and employees became relatively isolated from one another, duplication of services and resources persisted, and employees were afforded no permanent buy-in or connection to the purpose of why and how their jobs were an integral part of the County organization.

Departments' yearly plans and budgets were created based on current needs, not on long-term priorities. This approach created an environment where departments, out of necessity, viewed the organization and service to citizens through a narrower perspective of immediate needs, and limited fiscal and human resources. Processes implemented years before remained in place because "that's the way it had always been done". No sustainable system existed to cultivate fresh ideas from the locality's most valuable resource pool – the employees themselves.

Innovation

Beginning in 1999, and continuing through present day, Campbell County has embraced a philosophy which fosters employee leadership, encourages participation in collaborative, multi-departmental teams, and invites employee input in the long-term planning process. This innovative approach, based on the premise that all employees, regardless of full-time or part-time status, area of specialty, level of responsibility, or length of service, have valuable ideas and insights crucial to the organization's success.

Performance Improvement Teams: A volunteer*, parallel organization has been established, comprised of employee-driven teams, to address common issues and improve services and procedures throughout the organization; these are called Performance Improvement Teams (PITs) – (see attachment 1).

* *"Volunteer" indicates that employees have the option of participating; service time on PITs is incorporated into regular work hours.*

A Leadership Team, comprised of department heads, the County Administrator, and the County Attorney, has also been created to review the submissions and ideas of the PITs and to provide constructive feedback or approval to proceed with recommended projects or processes.

Employees are given the opportunity to select teams on which they'd like to serve, based on first, second and third preferences. Names and focuses of the various teams have changed over the years to meet the growing needs of the organization; however, the current teams are: Motivation Team; Performance Improvement Objective (PIO) Review Team; Communications Team; Innovation Systems Team; Innovation Projects Team; Recruitment and Selection Team; Citizens Services Team; Coaching Appraisals and Work Plans Team; Personnel Development Team; and the Orientation Team. Leadership Team members review employee team placement requests and make assignments accordingly.

As team assignments are made, the following elements are taken into account:

- a. ensuring different departments are represented
- b. ensuring different levels of supervisory responsibility
- c. ensuring different levels of experience
- d. ensuring racial and gender diversity
- e. ensuring a good mix of complementary Myers-Briggs Type Indicators for personality types

Once assigned, teams are given lists by the Leadership Team of potential projects or areas identified as needing attention or revision. Teams are then assigned a Leadership Team mentor and an employee team leader. Team leaders notify their team members and set a regular meeting schedule to address key issues and cultivate ideas for improvement over the course of the year. (see attachment 2)

Planning: Priorities and Initiatives

To correspond with the implementation of the Performance Improvement Teams, the County organization has likewise devised a new, staff-based mechanism for long-term planning. This system is a four -step model which allows each department, with employee input, to select the major priorities and projects they feel will be the most

beneficial to citizens and the overall organization. Projects are divided into On-going, Priority 1 (upcoming fiscal year), Priority 2 (two years away) and Future (three to ten years away) categories; these are discussed by employees in their respective departments and submitted yearly by the department heads (for the upcoming budget year) to the Board of Supervisors for approval. Each priority is accompanied by a Performance Improvement Objective (PIO) plan (see attachment 3); these are detailed plans spelling out who is leading the project, direct and indirect staff time involved, employee hours anticipated for completion, total cost to the organization, a time frame for completion and a statement of overall benefit to citizens or the organization. The Board of Supervisors then allocates the needed resources to these projects through the budgeting process. Each year, priorities are evaluated and moved up to the next tier (Priority 2's move up to Priority 1's, Future Priorities slated for implementation move up to Priority 2's). This mechanism ensures that all employees have an active role in making the major decisions that affect the locality's long-term direction and that all involved have a comprehensive view of future plans and their individual and departmental responsibilities.

By linking a democratic organizational model to a long-term planning system, Campbell County has established a method through which citizens reap the benefits of more efficient business practices and services, and employees express their ideas to initiate positive change. Organizational and political leaders benefit from employees' ingenuity and commitment toward helping departments and the county, as a whole, reach its desired goals.

Partnering/Collaboration

One purpose of the Performance Improvement Teams (PITs) is to cultivate inter-departmental collaborations and foster an environment where employees feel they are a part of larger purpose, outside of their daily tasks. These teams (which meet at least once a month) allow employees from the various areas to become acquainted with each other as well as the operations of other Campbell County offices. This assists staff in gaining different perspectives on common problems or issues. These collaborations provide communication conduits which cross many levels and areas of service, and likewise help staff discover untapped internal and external resources (i.e. departments now discuss and share equipment rather than purchasing it separately; departments share employees with certain skill

sets or materials to aid other departments on projects where certain expertise or support is needed). With regard to planning, employees collaborate as equals with managers, elected officials and staff from other departments to address common challenges and jointly accomplish approved priorities and initiatives, as indicated in the Performance Improvement Objectives (PIOs). Through this internal cooperation, cultivated by the PITs, Campbell County has sustained a highly productive, fiscally sound organization for over a decade.

Model for Other Localities

This organizational model can be adopted by any locality or agency as it uniformly encourages input from all service levels and supports cooperative, long-term planning. Based on fundamental principles of equality and supporting the philosophy that elected officials, managers, employees, and citizens share a common interest in better serving the general public, this model may be implemented with relatively little cost, while producing significant benefits to the organization, including:

- inter-departmental cooperation
- stream lined processes, developed by employees who serve citizens daily
- buy-in from employees in all areas of service
- open and honest feedback from teams seeking to improve the overall organization
- an effective planning and budgeting tool which defines long-term goals and funding allocations
- the personal and organizational advantages of bonding as a team on common issues

(see attachment 4)

Program Implementation/Budget/Staffing

This organizational model has been building and strengthening since its inception in 1999. The following steps are followed, yearly, to ensure PITs and the yearly planning processes are well-communicated to all employees:

Performance Improvement Teams:

- A list of organizational issues, opportunities, or common areas of concern are identified by the Leadership Team and sent to all employees for input.
- Performance Improvement Teams (PITs) are established to address identified issues; employee volunteers are assigned to diverse teams; mentors and team leaders are selected for each team.
- The Leadership Team compiles a list of potential projects or issues for the PITs to consider, based on employee feedback. (see attachment 5)
- Teams begin meeting monthly to research and brainstorm solutions to problems. Project presentations are scheduled for Leadership Team review.
- Final project proposals are submitted to the Leadership Team for approval; projects may be immediately implemented or inserted into the upcoming year's priorities and initiatives for funding allocations and staffing assignments.

Employee-driven Planning:

- September - The Board of Supervisors holds a planning retreat with staff.
- October - Employees have the opportunity to provide input on priorities and initiatives to department leaders.
- November - The Leadership Team, with input from staff, drafts the proposed priorities and initiatives.
- January – The Board reviews and adopts priorities and initiatives.
- February – Staff develops the Capital Improvement Plan to support the approved priorities and initiatives.
- March – Staff develops the operating budget to support priorities and initiatives, complete with PIOs.
- May – The Board adopts the budget.
- July – Challenging and measurable work plans are developed at the individual and team levels to let employees know precisely what they are expected to do.

- August - Employee Performance Appraisals are due. These appraisals reflect work done on the prior year's adopted priorities and initiatives and are directly tied to employee merit increases.

Planning Tiers - Priorities and Initiatives:

In Campbell County's organizational model, priorities and initiatives consist of employee-proposed projects and programs deemed as necessary in order to best serve citizens and to keep the County organization moving forward. Goals and objectives, in turn, spell out specific action plans for employees to follow to accomplish the priorities and initiatives approved by the Board (i.e. Performance Improvement Objectives). The following four tiers have been developed to organize departments' priorities over a multi-year period:

- **On-going** – These are tasks and projects that occur every year and are a general part of overall operation.
- **Priority 1** – These have the highest urgency in the Board of Supervisors' priorities and initiatives and require a completed Performance Improvement Objective (PIO) plan. These are scheduled for completion and funding allocations during the upcoming fiscal year.
- **Priority 2** – These projects will move up to Priority 1's the following year and require the first stage of the PIO planning to be completed. These projects will receive Board appropriated funding during the next fiscal year.
- **Future** - These are projects which will require staff time and financial support in the future.

The four levels of priority planning apply to everyone in the organization from the Board's priorities and initiatives to individual work plans; the format remains the same. The approved Board priorities correspond directly to departmental, team and individual priorities and goals, which in turn are incorporated into employee work plans to be measured in performance appraisals (see attachment 6).

The only costs associated with implementation of this program include:

- Training sessions for staff on new organizational model
- Sending Leadership Team members to LEAD to gain in-depth understanding of the HPO model (optional)

- Staff time to collect information, assign Performance Improvement Teams, and instruct employees on planning tiers

Program results:

This model's success has been proven through numerous innovative changes to internal processes, but most significantly in the shift of leadership responsibility to all employees throughout the organization. Over the past decade, this model has also directly resulted in many enhancements to the Campbell County organization, including but not limited to:

- Department's cooperatively participate in long-term planning and budgeting.
- Major innovative projects have been completed based on employee ideas (development of a full curriculum for Front Line Supervisor Training, implementation of a mandatory harassment training, improved signage to better direct citizens, etc).
- Communication with the public, employees and stakeholders has been enhanced through employee recommended changes to publication formats and implementation of more web-based information.
- Citizen Satisfaction surveys have been established to draw direct input from the public.
- Numerous innovative projects and processes have been recommended by current PITs. (see attachment 7)

Summary:

Overall, this shift in leadership philosophy, which encourages employees to embrace leadership in the organization, has greatly impacted the work culture within Campbell County's governmental work force. Employees feel valued, better ideas have emerged by drawing on the collective expertise of staff, and long-term planning is now approached as a collaborative effort between employees, leadership personnel, and elected officials. This model has proven to be sustainable, long-term, and has been embraced as a positive change throughout the organization. Campbell County is proud of these advancements and anticipates using this organizational model for many years to come.