



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2010 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 12, 2010

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (*select only one*):

- ☐ Community Health and Safety
- ☐ Community Partnership
- ☐ Community Sustainability
- ☒ Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Innovation through a Culture of Continuous Improvement

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Montgomery, Ohio

Jurisdiction population(s): 10,163

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2009, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: December Year: 2008

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in San José, California, October 2010. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Cheryl Hilvert

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Montgomery

Name: Wayne S. Davis

Title: Assistant City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Montgomery

Name: _____

Title: _____

Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Robert Harrison

Title: City Manager and
President, OCMA

Jurisdiction: City of Wyoming

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Strategic Leadership and Governance

City of Montgomery - Innovation through a Culture of Continuous Improvement

Problem assessment, the challenge or need that prompted the Montgomery to develop the program

The City of Montgomery embraces the High Performance Organization model of providing outstanding customer value, and high product and service quality in a sound financial manner to its residents, businesses and visitors. As part of the experience, a work culture has developed that focuses on employee engagement, leadership, accountability and innovation. The City of Montgomery has established a clear mission of “Taking Responsibility Together to Provide Superior Services” with value statements, employee expectations and an organizational leadership philosophy that emphasizes a commitment to responsive, high quality service, employee leadership at all levels of the organization, decision making based on creative problem solving, collaboration, continuous improvement, and stewardship of the entire organization. In 2007, the City of Montgomery approached a local company, TechSolve, to help jumpstart innovative thinking.

Program Implementation and Costs

TechSolve worked with the City’s Efficiency and Effectiveness Team - a cross-departmental team of employees focused on city-wide improvement (efficiency) and performance measurement (effectiveness) - to apply a consistent and standard approach to process redesign and continuous improvement of services. TechSolve utilized the train-the-trainer method to build an internal continuous improvement competency within the City. TechSolve led the members of the Efficiency and Effectiveness Team through three pre-selected process improvement exercises utilizing LEAN, a technique designed to look at all activities in the process and eliminate or reduce any activity that does not add value. LEAN process improvement focuses on three objectives: reducing cost, improving quality and improving service delivery. TechSolve facilitated the first review and gradually transferred facilitation to the Efficiency and Effectiveness Team members. After the third process review effort, the City of Montgomery had a cadre of skilled staff members who could lead any process improvement effort in the

City. The cost of the training was \$18,500 for three days of professional development. The improvements that have materialized as a result of LEAN have saved more than the cost of training.

Utilizing the LEAN process improvement skills, the Efficiency and Effectiveness Team embarked upon projects for improvement and innovation throughout the City. Each process review was facilitated by a member of the Efficiency and Effectiveness Team along with one or two process owners and a person who is totally removed from the process. This mix is effective because it brings together many perspectives. It solicits ideas from people with fresh eyes on the inner workings of the process. Some examples of process improvements include the review of the City's downtown holiday lighting, fire hydrant maintenance, cemetery management, and changes to snow removal operations.

Tangible results and measurable outcomes of the program

Downtown Holiday Lights - Residents praise the holiday lights in the downtown district and enjoy the ambiance of the season, but many hours of hard work by the Public Works staff are needed to make this display a reality. Weeks are spent testing, transporting and installing the lights, but the city could not quantify the exact number of hours devoted to the task. Staff knew there had to be a more efficient and cost effective approach. In the fall, the lights would be unpacked and tested. If the lights did not work, the employees would test each bulb until the fault was found. Duplicate work included putting the lights on a large spool and then transferring them to a smaller spool while removing them from storage and placing them on a truck. A team of employees reviewed the holiday lighting process focusing on the amount of time spent on inspecting, installing, and storing of holiday lights.

The team discovered that approximately 2,730 hours were devoted to the process that extended from removing lights from storage to placing them back in storage at the end of the season. As a result of the process review, each strand of lights is now tested when they are taken down at the end of the season. If the strand does not light, it is set aside for recycling and replacement strands are purchased for the following season. In addition, lights are spooled so they can be placed directly on the truck.

Outcomes

- Savings of more than 2,400 person hours representing a reduction of 88%.
- Cost: 50 hours of employee time (4 process reviewers and 1 facilitator at 10 hours each)

Fire Hydrant Maintenance - Fire hydrant maintenance and painting was a laborious and time-consuming chore for firefighters. After viewing the success of the holiday light process, the firefighters were eager to see if they could achieve similar results in their process. The process improvement review team realized that this chore consisted of three “mini” processes - hydrant repairs, spring and fall maintenance, and hydrant painting. An employee outside the department suggested combining the spring and fall maintenance list with the hydrant painting list which resulted in less person hours and also allowed firefighters to complete the painting task during a cooler time of the year.

Outcomes

- Fire hydrant maintenance reduced from six weeks to one week ensuring hydrants are available during an emergency by having them repaired and returned to service as quickly as possible.
- Cost: 56 hours of employee time (3 process reviewers and 1 facilitator at 14 hours each)

Cemetery Management – About fifteen years ago, the City of Montgomery took ownership of a cemetery. Records provided to the City when ownership was transferred consisted of index cards, many of which were decades old, often containing inaccurate information. As the City expanded the number of burial plots and began to sell them, a better record-keeping system was needed. In addition, the group handling burials did not understand what took place between the initial notification from the funeral home and the plot sales, transfers or other administrative tasks required before burials could be scheduled. The team researched record management systems and found an option that was cost effective and provided for a GIS survey of the cemetery to ensure that the plot locations are correct and that they matched the cards on file. It also provided an electronic database that could store the GIS and plot information for quick search and verification. Gaining a global understanding of the process by all employees involved with managing the cemetery, better prepared staff to answer questions and manage a sensitive process in the most efficient and effective manner for the customer.

Outcomes

- Better understanding of the each person's responsibility, better service to the customer, less confusion for our external and internal customers, more accurate and accessible records of burial plots.
- Cost: 50 hours of employee time (4 process reviewers and 1 facilitator at 10 hours each). In addition, \$4,000 for electronic record keeping program and GIS mapping of burial plots.

De-icing Rock Salt Shortage - During the fall of 2008 the City of Montgomery was facing a 172% increase in the cost of de-icing rock salt due to a severe supply shortage. Although residents and businesses were generally satisfied with Montgomery's snow removal, the challenge the City faced was how to maintain expected levels of service when de-icing rock salt prices increased from approximately \$46 to \$125 per ton with a limited regional supply. The solution was a team effort that extended from the novice, front-line employee to the executive level and involved creative problem solving. The plan that was emerged included better route management, coordination with the local school district to ensure that plow routes coincided with bus routes, testing with salt brine, plowing at lower snow accumulation thresholds, using less salt, purchasing additional plows for light duty trucks that could plow side streets, and allowing larger trucks to focus more time on major thoroughfares. In addition, enhanced notification procedures were developed to inform the community of the shortage and the steps that were being taken to address the situation and ensure their safety.

At the end of the season, the Public Works staff surveyed residents and reviewed the calls and messages left on the snow hotline. Over 70% of responses were positive. The 30% negative responses were from individuals who did not live in the City of Montgomery or who were commenting about roads serviced by other communities/public agencies. In addition, the snow hotline significantly reduced the number of calls to the customer service department during winter storms allowing them to concentrate on other tasks.

Outcomes

- Reduction of 300 tons of salt resulting in a savings of \$40,000. Montgomery residents were satisfied with the snow removal efforts.
- Cost: 100 hours of employee time distributed throughout the organization during different meetings. In addition, \$1,750 for the cost of postcard mailers and postage and the installation of a telephone hotline.

Lessons learned

There was initial apprehension at the cost of the LEAN training as well as concern about staff assuming work that is more management than technical. As evidenced in the examples above, the cost of the training has been paid back many times over. The City of Montgomery has recognized that better trained employees spark innovations that can save considerable resources and add value to the overall product and service delivery.

The LEAN process is now an integral part of the work culture with the Efficiency and Effectiveness team coaching in-house experts who can facilitate LEAN process reviews throughout the City. This has helped increase the frequency of process reviews and service improvement and has furthered the goal of integrating LEAN into the work culture of the City.

In addition the LEAN process reviews have created front-line employees now engaged in their work beyond the traditional front-line service delivery role. Employees take on leadership and management roles as they relate to understanding their work and why some steps are done, the way they are done, and where improvements can be gained. By having a detailed understanding of an entire process and direct contributions on how to make improvements, front-line employees take ownership and are more willing to seek further improvements. Employees are expected to be engaged in the work of the City and take on leadership and management roles in making changes to improve service. This has forced managers to put aside their egos and the tendency to control issues and instead requires every manager to provide the resources and support necessary for the front-line workers to make positive impacts on services delivered and to develop defined objectives in order to determine whether or not success will be achieved through the proposed changes or implementation steps. Managers are less likely to micromanage staff and are more likely to coach, mentor and develop their employees to succeed, in turn benefiting the community with more efficient services and employees who are stewards of the entire city.