

Partnerships Magazine

In this issue:

Manatee County, Florida

"Teamwork makes the dream work"

How working with local organizations helped this vibrant community become economically sustainable

Also in this issue:

Cover sheet information, synopsis, presentation style for this case study and kudos

Cover Sheet

Case Study Title: Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

Case Study Category: Partnerships

Jurisdiction Name: Manatee County, Florida

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Would you like the application to be considered for an Innovation Award? Yes

Would you like the application to be considered for our Rapid Fire Session? Yes

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Synopsis



Intent of the Project/Program/Service

The intent of the project is to build relationships, connect partners, constituents, and customers in an effort to enhance the county's visibility as a great place to grow and sustain business, live, work, play, and dream. Diverse county departments are united through shared leadership and vision to find unique solutions to challenging questions for economic development projects. The business friendly government demonstrates interest and goodwill and seeks to provide beneficial and helpful service to businesses looking to expand or locate in Manatee County. Community partnerships have been developed, strengthened and enhanced to facilitate a coordinated, seamless approach to economic development and job creation in the county. The key organizations involved in the *Dream Team* are *Manatee Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)*, *Port Manatee* and the *Bradenton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)*. These partners leverage team strengths to achieve the goal of being recognized as a world class community alongside the *Neighborhood Services Department*, *Economic Development Division (EDD)*.

Neighborhood Services is a broad department dedicated to improving our community through Economic Development, Community Development, Libraries, and Neighborhood Planning. The *EDD* provides incentives, support, and services that help existing and potential businesses grow and create quality jobs for citizens. The result of this forward looking activity is increased job opportunities, expanded exports, and wealth created for the citizens and businesses of Manatee County.

The *MEDC* works to improve the economic health of the community by attracting and retaining companies, which bring increased capital investments and high-paying jobs to Manatee County, resulting in improved quality of life for the entire region. The greatest regional driver for economic development is Port Manatee. Likewise, *Port Manatee* is a powerful catalyst for county wide economic growth and a hub of trade-related activity. *Port Manatee* strives to develop diversified and competitive deepwater shipping facilities and conduct maritime-related activities in a profitable and environmentally responsible manner.

The *CVB* promotes Manatee County nationally and internationally as a destination for business and leisure travel. The exposure provided through the linkage between the *CVB* and other trade/travel countries expands the base of opportunity for the local economy.

This *Dream Team* operates with respect, honesty, and passion to provide excellent customer service to all businesses seeking information about Manatee County. The *Dream Team* strives to:

- Diversify the economic base and cushion Manatee County against economic shocks
- Attract knowledge-based talent to Manatee County
- Generate career opportunities for local residents
- Improve the standard of living

- Provide a place with economic opportunities for our future and our children's future
- Preserve the quality of life in Manatee County

Costs

The costs of the partnership are associated with the amount of staff time dedicated to economic development project meetings across partner organizations and departments of county government. Meetings held with economic development customers often include management staff of all partners and development review agencies and may include over 15 management level staff who are on hand to provide accurate, up-to-date, and proactive information that assists companies make the business decision to locate or expand in Manatee County. The project scoping meetings are held just-in-time and at the convenience of the business citizen, often requiring staff to manage time and multiple priorities. A manufacturing company that recently expanded in Manatee County commented on the process: *"With your office coordinating, the pre-submittal process was efficient since all applicable agencies were present at the first meeting to work out any potential difficulties or conflicts prior to our completing design or submitting plans."*



Savings

The project saves time and resources through coordinated and seamless communications between *Dream Team* partners and customers. While there is an inherent cost in the use of staff time, the benefits outweigh the cost. The savings are demonstrated by holding single meetings with all partners and reviewers where information is shared across disciplines and organizations, rather than holding several fragmented meetings. This approach increases communication and provides clarity for customers and partners. In addition, increased efficiencies are achieved due to effective communication and clearly defined roles among the partners, which guards against duplication of services and activities. Through shared vision and actions, partners work closely to portray consistent messages in social media, marketing, and collateral materials. *A local contractor recently stated that through the efforts of the partners, permits were received quickly and with no problems, that saved time and money and made the owner happy since they will be able to make their scheduled production start.* Press releases announcing the location or expansion of companies to Manatee County are developed jointly. Finally, communication has been greatly enhanced between the partners and throughout county government which reduces errors and increases decision-making for the entire team. The *Dream Team* model also provides opportunities for shared resources including marketing and collateral information pieces.

Innovative Characteristics and How They Improved the Organization

Establishing the Customized Project Team

Leads for economic development projects may be received by any of the partners. Once a lead is established, all partners work communicatively and collaboratively to band together to review the scope and scale of the potential economic development project. The *EDD* establishes the customized team of partners and county professional staff. The two department teams provide support and energy for the *Dream Team*. The *Jobs Now! Team* made up of at least one staff from every department in county government works to promote the shared vision or economic development in the larger organization. The mission of the Jobs Now! Team is to champion Manatee County, Florida as a great place to live, work, and play by cultivating relationships, facilitating partnerships, and providing "business friendly" customer service. Current and future initiatives of the *Jobs Now! Team* include:

- Economic development newsletter
- Recruitment of retired economic development executives to volunteer
- Improvement of statistical data.
- Comparing statistics
- Improve social media activity
- Develop a quick reference list for small businesses

The *Rapid Response Team*, is comprised of forward thinking professionals from across many departments of county government and other authorities such as fire districts, *Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD)*, *Florida Department of Environmental Protection Agency (DEP)* and *Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)*. The *Rapid Response Team* is setting the standard for customer service in the region. The developer of a new world headquarters in Manatee County affirmed that "in the many years I have been developing, at no point in time have I worked with a county that responded to a customer as Manatee County does. Your departments are simply the best! Having developed projects from Florida to New Mexico your team is simply the "cream of the crop." This recognition of the customer service brand of Manatee County is bringing results."

Scoping

Businesses looking to locate or expand in Manatee County can access the *EDD* to research and evaluate potential property for new business scoping, relocation and expansion. The *EDD* facilitates a team from the planning section, building section, transportation division, utilities, and other county services to provide maps and other development related information to assist businesses make sound decisions regarding land and building acquisition. This process is conducted utilizing the ACE philosophy established by the county administrator, which is an acronym for accountability, civility and ethics, the gold standard for professional behavior in Manatee County.



Planning, Permitting, Inspections, and Concurrency

The partners collaborate with the *Building and Development Services Department* to establish a schedule for meeting the timeline requested for Rapid Response projects. The schedule includes submission and approval of all required items required for Final Site Plan Approval including:

- Concurrency
- Preliminary Site Plan (PSP)
- Rezone
- Construction Plans
- Final Site Plan (FSP)

This may include pre-application meetings, sit-down completeness review, development review committee (DRC), construction plan pre-application meetings, comments to the applicant, public hearings and required advertising, and legal review. In some instances, coordination with *SWFWMD*, *DEP* and *FDOT* are required to complete the review.

Obstacles

The partners working together to build relationships with constituents and customers by providing an accommodating, consistent and predictable, “at-your-service” approach to serving the business community are occasionally presented with obstacles. These challenges include service capacity related to utilities in some locations, required right-of-way dedication for future transportation corridors, and various fees related to development that are not mitigated by economic development incentives.

Outcomes

The *Dream Team* has benefitted from the collaboration with partners by effectively dividing responsibilities and roles to provide a professional, intelligent and effective response to any economic development project. The outcome includes more than 60 businesses located or expanded in the community making a total capital investment in excess of \$381 million. Constituents benefit from the end result, which to date is the projected creation of well over 4,000 jobs in the next several years with an average wage of \$47,000 annually.

A worldwide leader in live family entertainment recently selected Manatee County as the future long term home of the company. Company representatives explained the reasons for locating in the community: *“Manatee County was selected due to the highly responsive economic development group who quickly pulled together a positive incentive package backed by thorough thought and forward insight. Each step of the way, the staff delivered with a supportive message combined with honest and open communication. While the economic package was the highest offered to a company in Manatee County, it was the personal touch and delivery of the promise of genuine collaboration which confirmed the decision.”*

Applicable Results and Real World Practicality

There is expanded cooperation among partners for consistent marketing and messaging to provide outreach and information regarding the county’s visibility as a great place to grow business, live, work, and play. Each of the partners report an increase in business contacts and customer satisfaction. There is also increased knowledge regarding all *Dream Team* resources. The excellent service brand is being communicated by our customers who consistently describe their experiences. Some recent comments regarding the enhanced service delivery resulting from the partnership includes: *“I picked up the permit this afternoon. This was a great experience with everything going smoothly and all of you being helpful. I hope we do more work in Manatee County. I know being a rapid response project helped but I think all of you would have been just as helpful if it had not been. I appreciate all of your help. Manatee County has been professional and a pleasure to work with. The other municipalities in the region should take notice that these type of projects can be planned and permitted efficiently. Thanks again!”*

Was a Private Consultant Used?

The initial Economic Development Program was established by the County Administrator with the approval of the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners. A private consultant was not used. Staff worked together to develop the processes and procedures for the Dream Team. The process is continually being evaluated and improved to ensure great efficiencies. The intent of the process is to define the seamless exchange of accurate and reliable information to the customer from a unified approach. Thus, at any given time if a key member is no longer involved in the program the remaining and/or new team member can pick up the process for the customer without change.



Presentation Style

Presentation Tools Plan to Use

The presentation will include a multimedia presentation to include powerpoint, videos, and web-based information. The video will include interviews on site with a local business customer and with persons who benefitted from employment as a result of the Dream Team work. The presentation will be interactive and may include an icebreaker, role playing games, and other hands-on activities.

