

Charleston County M.A.P. Commission

Notes from Focus Group March 18, 2004 – Leadership Program Alumni

Agencies/services represented

Planning (zoning/land use)
 Alcohol & Drug Prevention
 Research & Analysis (Director's office)
 Public Works (Roads, Resurface, C-funds, etc.)
 Capital Projects
 Deputy Chief Administrator
 Assessor
 Grants/Community & Workforce Development
 Public Information Office
 Procurement
 Fleet
 Parking
 Telecommunications
 Office Services
 Election Warehouse
 Records Management

Who are your stakeholders/customers?

Public
 Property owners
 Third-party payors (grants, agencies, ins.)
 Traveling public
 Legislative delegation
 DOT
 Local municipalities
 Media
 Vendors
 Business community
 Fire Districts
 Taxpayers
 Courts/Criminal Justice
 Federal agencies
 Education community
 Employees

What services are you most proud of/do you do well? How do you know?

- Build and repair houses & homeownership; get feedback through testimonials, comments from awarding agencies; exceed minimum requirements; recognition as model for the nation
- Collaboration with Mental Health and Alcohol and Drugs; low jail recidivism – 83% succeed; staff reorg led to 26 positions being eliminated out of 180+
- Procurement – we're 1 of 40 (out of 3000 agencies in US and Canada) that won government purchasing award; eliminated 2 positions
- Public Information Office – won highest award in U.S. for website; issues 107 pieces per month, 25% of which are positive
- Capital Projects – 0 disputed claims with \$110 million in construction; saved \$2.3 million in 5 years (success attributed to “ownership” of projects, relationship with contractor, solve problems, in-house estimates of job and change orders)
- Public Works – Mosquito Control program is one of best in SC/spray at breeding source technique; very comprehensive approach
- Roads – 1st in State in pavement management
- No tax increase in last 8 years, even though we built many new facilities (has downside, however)
- Budget office is performance-based; focus on efficiency and feels no need to spend allocation
- County has only on-site program that deals with a root cause of problem, (e.g., detox and depression)
- County provides services to other jurisdictions: EMS, Sheriff patrols, if requested, radio, criminal justice

What can Charleston County do better to improve customer service, cut costs, etc.?

- Public Relations: Educate customers on benefits and outcomes; use better visual aids; go direct to target audience without media “editing”
- Procurement: Approached City of Chs about consolidating procurement, but were frustrated at top levels
- Better explanation of tax bill
- Communicate that jails are not prisons, but for detention
- Communicate with front-line employees and the public; employees need to know their role in final product
- Spend \$ on county's “story”
- Maintenance of infrastructure has dropped (e.g., ditches should be done 2x/year)
- Identify new revenue resources
- Fix property tax (exemptions for privileged few)
- Revisit policies for maintaining community roads (private and public)
- Need to examine the way social services are provided (mental health and others); consolidate/use case management approach
- Re-consider Baldrige Award opportunity – Roland tried but met resistance
- Need common vision and strategic plan (we're about out of land in CHS Cty)

- Find out what our customers want
- Managed competition/outsourcing – do the right things the right way

Other issues, concerns:

- Employee reward system—no merit program; need to make department heads responsible for determining increases; everyone is now treated the same (slackers and doers)
- Employee turnover is a problem (check HR stats and exit interview data); hiring at midpoint, but not promoting
- Improve healthcare benefits for employees – with number of employees, should be able to secure more competitive benefits

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