



# 2008 Annual Awards Program

## Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

**Deadline for Nominations: March 14, 2008**

Complete this form and attach to 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: City of Southlake and Sabre Holdings Partnership

Jurisdiction where program originated: Southlake, TX

Jurisdiction population: 25,700

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, 2007 to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: December Year: 2006

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Richmond, Virginia, September 2008. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Shana K. Yelverton

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: Southlake, TX

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of person who should be contacted with questions regarding the nomination:

Alison Ortowski

Title of nominator: Asst. to the City Manager Jurisdiction of nominator: Southlake, TX

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City: Southlake State/Province: TX

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2008 ICMA Program Excellence Awards  
Community Partnership Award  
The City of Southlake and Sabre Holdings Partnership



**Background**

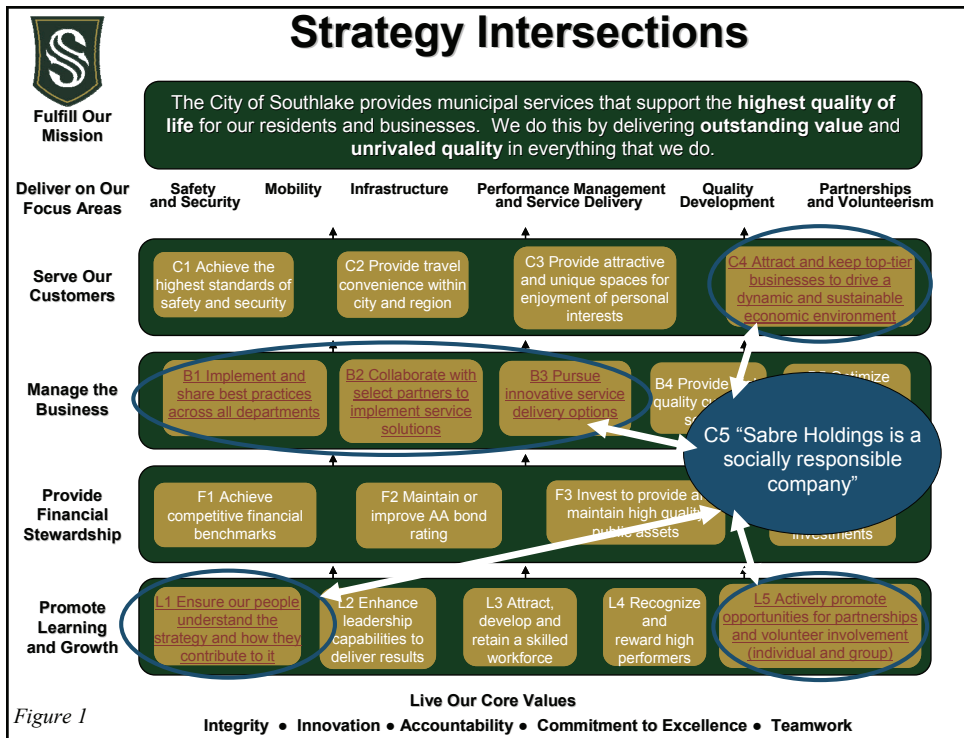
The City of Southlake, Texas (the City) is known as a premier city located in north Texas. With a population of 25,700, Southlake enjoys a reputation for both its commercial and residential real estate success and also for its innovative government operations that are based on core values – Integrity, Innovation, Accountability, Commitment to Excellence, and Teamwork. The City has developed a Strategic Management System (SMS) that utilizes a balanced scorecard strategy map. This approach to conducting the business of government is ground-breaking in the field and Southlake is often referenced as a benchmark city in this area. The City is also leading the industry with Lean Thinking and has held lean events to evaluate a number of processes (development review process, permitting process, annual budget process) to remove waste and maximize the degree of service quality.

Sabre Holdings, whose worldwide headquarters are located in Southlake, is equally innovative in the private sector. They connect people with the world's greatest travel possibilities by retailing travel products and providing distribution and technology solutions for the travel industry. They are a privately held company with revenues of \$2.8 billion in 2006 and more than 9,000 employees in 59 countries. They are driven by core values – integrity, innovation, customer focus and results driven... always with a passion for excellence.

**Need Assessment**

In April 2006, a rather unique government/private partnership was born between the City and Sabre Holdings. A conversation between two neighbors, one who happened to be a Southlake councilman - John Terrell, and the other who was a Sabre executive - Scott Alvis, brought forth a number of similarities between the two organizations both of which are known for their innovation and efficient, effective service delivery based on core values. The neighbors realized that a partnership between the two organizations could produce enormous results.

From the beginning, the ultimate goal of the partnership was to improve the service delivery of each organization by identifying areas where the strategies of the two organizations intersected and



then develop action items that could address the needs of the partners at those intersections. One of Sabre's goals is to be a socially responsible company. Under that umbrella, the City has been able to identify many areas of its own strategy that intersect with that goal.

(See Figure 1.) Ultimately, the two organizations discovered that because of these intersections, the efficiency and effectiveness of services as well as quality of life could be improved by developing this partnership.

**Implementation**

Following the initial meeting between John Terrell and Scott Alvis (described earlier), a meeting was held in early 2006 to familiarize the senior management staff of both organizations. At this initial meeting, the attendees brainstormed ways each entity could add value to one another based on their respective resources and strategic direction.

In July 2006, Scott Alvis gave a presentation to city staff on how Sabre embraces and implements innovation. As a follow-up to Mr. Alvis' presentation, Wendy Skinner, Sabre's Director of Corporate Performance Management, attended the city's executive retreat in October of 2006 to give the city further insight into Sabre's SMS. It was at this meeting that Sabre became familiar with the City's own SMS with the conclusion being that each organization was going in the same direction, strategically speaking. Further implementation of the partnership included periodic meetings where

each organization would offer progress reports on initiatives and also offer opportunities to brainstorm on future initiatives. More than 25 meetings between the two organizations have been held since January 2007.

The innovation and leadership of this program is quite unique. In fact, the City conducted extensive research to find another similar partnership and found nothing. Private corporations and government entities often partner on development projects or are involved only on specific community projects such as the development of a park. Rarely do you find a private company and a government assisting one another with achieving the goals of their organizations by developing partnership opportunities that enhance the leadership and operational functions of each organization. Even rarer is a partnership that results in cost-savings for each participant or minimal to no-cost for program implementation.

### **Outcomes**

Key outcomes of the partnership have been numerous but those with the most impact have been in the areas of organizational development, best practice sharing and community projects.

Key Outcome 1: Organizational Development: Sabre has been essential to the development of the City's balanced scorecard approach to the SMS and strategy map development. In December 2006, Ms. Skinner met with city staff to assist with the creation of the City's first strategy map. This map is connected to the SMS, is based on the city's vision, mission, and strategic focus areas and has since become the keystone of the City's SMS. The City Council and staff have worked together to ensure that decision-making and resource allocation are now aligned under the SMS. Feeding the master plan are departmental business plans, executive team performance contracts which outline expectations and levels of performance and constantly evolving performance measures (known internally as key accountability indicators or "k.a.i.s") to assess the quality and quantity of the work performed. What this ultimately means is that many city operations are now measurable which helps to improve management systems and workforce competency, as well as promote greater accountability for all employees.

The impact of the partnership between Southlake and Sabre has gone above and beyond anyone's expectations. In regards to strategic management and innovation, Southlake has been able to learn from one of the nation's corporate leaders. Southlake has studied Sabre's ideas on strategic management and innovation and has been able to apply those concepts to a local government format. Through this strategic partnership, Sabre has gained a better understanding of city policies and procedures. Sabre employees are familiar with city management and staff and feel more connected to the community where they work and live.

Key Outcome 2: Best Practice Sharing: As a part of the continuous effort to share best practices the City and Sabre have shared ideas on environmental initiatives and wellness programs. The City formed a Green Team in November 2007 after meeting with Sabre about its own environmental initiatives. Sabre's campus observes a daily recycling program and Sabre has built one of the largest facilities in the United States to receive a silver award from the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program. The City's Green Team has identified goals for the organization and is in the process of creating a workplan for the upcoming year. Goals include reducing the City's energy consumption and costs at city facilities as well as promoting greater awareness throughout the community about green practices through targeted marketing programs.

Regarding wellness programs, *Men's Fitness* recently named Sabre Holdings as one of the 15 Fittest Companies in America. Sabre's Wellness Program, started in 2004, includes fitness, nutrition, stress relief and weight-loss challenges for employees. The City, recently kicked off weekly employee walks, called "Healthy Hearts in Southlake Parks." Walks are organized every Friday during lunch to encourage people to go out and walk (and see Southlake parks). The long-term plan is to create a group that may participate in runs or walks as a team, a few of which have already participated in a 5K in Fort Worth, Texas.

Key Outcome 3: Collaborative Efforts: In November 2006, the newest branch of the Southlake Library opened at the world headquarters of Sabre Holdings, but at this library not a book can be

found. In this first-of a kind program, the City of Southlake and Sabre created a municipal *virtual* library, the first of its kind in a corporate site nationally. It is virtual in the sense that the branch has no holdings, and users request materials and relate to the library virtually, and then items are delivered from the central library. It is one of a very few corporate/municipal libraries in the country, and the only one in Texas. It has proven to be an extremely cost effective process. The Library pulls requested titles in the morning; the items are checked out to the customer and dropped off at Sabre mailroom, who then distributes the item to the staff member's desk. Minimal library staff time is required to provide excellent service right to their desk. There are 502 Sabre card holders at this point in time, which is approximately 3% of total cardholders. This is approximately 15% of staff on the corporate campus and applications continue to come in. The City delivered approximately 10,000 items last fiscal year, which was about 4% of the Library's total circulation of 260,000 items.

### **Lessons Learned**

The biggest lesson learned from the Southlake and Sabre Holdings partnership is that strong collaborations between corporations and local government agencies can exist. So much so that the City and Sabre are now developing a model program whose focus will be identifying strategy intersections with other stakeholders in Southlake in order to advance the City's SMS and improve services by involving the community in the pursuit of the City's goals and objectives.

"Municipalities and corporations are sometimes hesitant to work together. The two organizations come from different sectors and a misconception may exist that they cannot benefit from one another. My experience working with Sabre completely refutes this fallacy," states Shana Yelverton, Southlake City Manager. Southlake has gained invaluable insight from Sabre's management style and has succeeded in implementing its own SMS. This process would have been much more arduous had it not been for the guidance and experience of Sabre executives. Southlake and Sabre are perfect examples of true public/private collaboration. By offering each other their expertise and resources, together they are improving the communities and lives of those they serve.