

ICMA 2010 Program Excellence Awards
Pasco County Board of County Commissioners
"LEAP Into Excellence"

Program Overview

In the fall of 2007, Pasco County launched the LEAP Into Excellence Initiative (Lean, Efficient, Accountable Pasco) with the goal of improving service to our citizens and achieving excellence in government. What began as an internal process improvement project to reduce expenditures and increase efficiency has blossomed into a county-wide effort to reshape government and improve the quality of life in Pasco. The project has touched every county department, saved millions in taxpayer dollars and engaged thousands of residents and county employees in creating a road map for the future. This road map includes the county's first, three-year Strategic Plan; a new Vision, Mission and Values statement; and a detailed Business Plan outlining more than 30 new initiatives designed to meet the county's six key Strategic Challenge Areas.

The response from the public, our employees and the media, has been substantial and encouraging. One local newspaper columnist described the county's efforts to engage the public in its efforts as "extraordinary." More than 100 employees have signed on to participate in various stages of the process. In just over two years, LEAP has effectively changed how Pasco County does business and how we communicate with our citizens and employees.

Problem/Need

Like local governments throughout the nation, Pasco County has faced declining revenues and increased costs at a time when the need for public services is constantly increasing. Combined with record unemployment, declining property values and foreclosures, the economic outlook has continued to worsen over the past two years.

Although the LEAP Initiative began shortly before the current economic downturn, it was driven by the realization that, for local government to succeed, business as usual was no longer going to be sufficient to sustain the quality of services our citizens have come to expect.

County leaders recognized early on that any effort to right-size government or streamline public services would require extensive public input and engagement in order to succeed. To that end, the county launched a broad community engagement process that brought our message to thousands of residents, business leaders, community representatives, and county employees. By engaging our stakeholders every step of the way, educating them about the county budget and asking for their input, Pasco County has been able to focus increasingly limited resources on the services our citizens want and need most.

Program Implementation & Costs

Wherever possible, Pasco County has sought to implement the LEAP Initiative using existing staff and internal resources, although outside assistance was sought for some aspects of the project. The dedication and enthusiasm of staff toward LEAP has been a key factor in the program's success, with more than 100 employees committing to participate in the process at various stages.

The first step was a series of accountability meetings held in the fall of 2007 between County Administration and front-line supervisors, where staff was directed to identify cost-savings and process improvements. That led to the creation of Process Improvement Teams (PIT Crews) in every county department. The PIT Crews have continued to meet regularly for the past two years to continue identifying ways to eliminate waste and streamline processes. (More than \$6 million in cost savings have been identified to date.)

A LEAP Core Team, made up of top county staff and key department and division heads, meets every other week to provide the leadership, guidance and support needed during our journey toward excellence. Finally, a Performance Development Team has committed to the extensive training and education required to help the county meet the Sterling Criteria for Performance Excellence, as well as oversee the county's ongoing performance measurement and continuous process improvement efforts.

Two outside partnerships – with the Urban Land Institute and the International City County Management Association – have been the main outside expenses the county incurred. Total cost costs incurred through ULI and ICMA are as follows:

- ULI - \$57,500 for the Advisory Services Panel Process and Report. (Through a partnership with the Pasco Economic Development Council, Pasco County paid 50% of the total \$115,000 ULI cost.)
- ICMA - \$175,000 for ongoing assistance with LEAP, the Strategic Plan, Business Plan, Process Improvement and more.

Key Partnerships

Under the umbrella of LEAP, the county joined with the Pasco Economic Development Council in March 2008 to invite the Urban Land Institute to assess the county's economic and land development activities. During its five-day review, the ULI Advisory Services Panel interviewed more than 100 community and business leaders, reviewed the county's Comprehensive Plan and met with top county staff. The result was a 45-page report on the county's organizational structure, future land use and economic development potential.

Assisted by the International City County Management Association, Pasco has sought to aggressively implement the ULI recommendations to address key local and regional challenge areas. This implementation has included the creation of the county's first, three-year Strategic Plan; the development of a Vision, Mission and Values statement, as well as a Modified Business Plan with 12 new county initiatives.

ICMA also assisted the county with a broad outreach process that included a survey mailed to more than 1,200 residents; a series of community "stakeholder" meetings, where participants were able to register their opinions using handheld electronic voting devices; and more than a dozen small focus groups. Hundreds of people attended these meetings, completed the surveys or emailed their suggestions.

Although ICMA's initial involvement was substantial, their approach has been to "teach the county to fish" so that future projects would not require outside support. The county has already launched its 2010 education and awareness campaign, "Bringing

Opportunities Home," which is expected to be even broader than last year's and will be handled entirely through existing staff and resources.

Results/Outcomes

The successes of Pasco County's LEAP Into Excellence initiative have truly exceeded expectations. Millions of dollars in cost savings, improved service to citizens and streamlined processes by county staff were the initial goals when LEAP first began and those goals continue to be reached every day.

A small sample of some of the most significant cost savings is listed below.

- Utilities, \$2.3 million – A cost the county has avoided under a renegotiated contract with Covanta Energy. In addition to this savings, an additional \$300,000-\$ 400,000 is expected to be saved annually.
- Information Technology, \$1.2 million – The rebidding or renegotiating of contracts with a variety of service providers, as well as, in some cases, switching service providers and modifying services or software.
- Development Review/Development Services, \$357,531 – Significant savings in paper and printing costs, as well as staff time from the use of technology to assign building inspection requests electronically and route site plans electronically.
- Road & Bridge, \$236,439 – Savings generated through a variety of means, including the rebid of the annual asphalt contract (\$62,222), use of less costly or in-house materials (\$53,500) and aggressive pursuit of restitution for damage to County property (\$120,717).
- PEARL, \$96,787 - Pasco Electronic Animal Registration & Licensing (PEARL) is expected to save Animal Services more than 3,120 hours in staff time currently used for data entry and tracking, for a cost benefit of approximately \$31,200 in personnel costs that can be redirected to other tasks. The program is also expected to generate additional revenue of \$96,787 annually due to better enforcement of currently unlicensed and unvaccinated dogs.

Additional Outcomes

By other external measurements – media coverage, attendance and participation at public meetings and workshops, and increased use of the county's website – the county has experienced more community involvement and engagement than most local officials have seen in decades. Some measurable indicators include:

- More than 100 residents, business and community leaders participated in lengthy interviews with the Urban Land Institute to help the county improve its economic development and land use activities. Many of these same individuals continue to be involved through the ongoing rewrite of the county's Land Development Code and other efforts.

- Of the 1,200 surveys mailed to Pasco residents, 368 completed and returned surveys through the National Citizen Survey process, for an overall response rate of 32%, well within the typical response obtained by NCS of 25% to 40%. Most of these indicate overall satisfaction with county services, though areas for improvement were also noted.
- Several hundred residents attended one of four community stakeholder meetings held throughout the county to gain feedback on county services, the budget and future growth. Dozens more attended smaller focus group sessions to speak directly to county staff on issues of importance to them.
- Since the county launched its online Customer Service Center, more than 7,500 users have signed on to the system and more than 9,000 "requests for service" have been entered. The Frequently Asked Question system has processed more than 20,000 searches for information.
- Dozens of articles have appeared in the local newspapers chronicling the county's efforts to engage the public and achieve excellence in government. Most have been positive and a few editorials have applauded the county's initiative during these difficult economic times.

Use of Technology

Pasco County has embraced technology as a means of keeping our citizens informed and engaged in our efforts. Below is a list of the various means we have used in our public education and awareness campaign.

- Inside Pasco/Intranet – This is Pasco County's "intranet," where we have kept our employees involved in the process, posting results of employee surveys, updates to LEAP through the employee newsletter, along with other educational and motivational documentation.
- LEAP Into Excellence Web Page - With the volume of information being generated, the county created a LEAP Into Excellence Web Page as part of its redesigned web portal. All LEAP documentation, including the citizen survey results and stakeholder summary, is posted on the site, which has been used extensively by citizens, businesses, employees and others interested in the process.
- www.pascocountyfl.net – This is Pasco County's website, which has been redesigned and enhanced in many ways over the past two years, including the addition of the LEAP page and an online Customer Service Center, where citizens can submit a request for service, pay a bill or check the status of a permit application.
- Pasco Government TV_ – The county's government access station, where we have been able to air our community stakeholder meetings, promote upcoming events related to LEAP and our Strategic Planning process, and broadcast extensive programming explaining the budget, the LEAP Initiative and our rightsizing effort.

- Online Surveys / Survey Monkey – We have used these to gauge employee opinion on our initiatives, as well as survey the public. We hope to enhance these efforts with more public surveys through our Customer Service Center & Gov QA in the coming year.
- Handheld Electronic Voting Devices – These were used to stimulate audience participation and gain immediate public input during our community stakeholder meetings. These results were tabulated and posted online.