

STRATEGIC FOCUS 2007-2010



ICMA Annual Awards Program Nomination for Mike Murray, Chief Administrative Officer Linking Values to Organizational Excellence for the Region of Waterloo

Introduction

The Region of Waterloo's values are *Service, Integrity, Respect, Innovation and Collaboration*. These five values have been fundamental in the development of a strong staff culture at the Region of Waterloo and they have helped shape and guide major directions at the Region of Waterloo. Mike Murray, the Chief Administrative Officer at the Region of Waterloo has provided the leadership and infrastructure that has placed a strong focus on the Region of Waterloo Values. This focus has, in turn influenced strategy and become the foundation to support the organization's success in providing excellent public service to the community.

The Need

The Region of Waterloo has over 3000 employees and 3000 volunteers that provide a diverse array of services in a variety of locations throughout Waterloo Region. At the beginning of the 2007 strategic planning process, Mike Murray led efforts to solicit citizen and staff input on future priorities for Waterloo Region. Through this process, he quickly came to the conclusion that in order to achieve the priorities set out in the Strategic Plan, the organization needed to place a strong focus not just on how well the Region was achieving the priorities, but also on how staff and volunteers provide service to the community.

Mike Murray's vision for using values to create organizational excellence was validated in research conducted by Brian Marson and Ralph Heintzman called the

Public Sector Value Chain (2003). This research has identified that the more engaged and supported staff feel, the better service they provide and the more satisfied citizens are with services. This helps improve the level of trust and confidence the public has in the Region of Waterloo. The emphasis on the values provide the foundation for the public sector chain to be successful.

The program

At the beginning of the 2007 – 2010 Strategic Planning process there was strong support for the need to refresh the 2004-2006 Corporate Vision, Mission and Values to make them more memorable and meaningful for our staff, volunteers and Council. In order to refresh the Region's core values feedback was collected through staff input sessions, departmental meetings, an on-line survey and strategic planning sessions with Council. The five Values were approved by Council in November 2007 as part of approving the 2007-2010 Strategic Plan. The values are:

Service	We provide excellent public service and strive to understand and meet the needs of all those we serve.
Integrity	We practice high standards of ethical behaviour and conduct ourselves with an openness and transparency that inspires trust.
Respect	We create an environment where people are included, valued and treated with dignity.
Innovation	We foster an environment of leadership, excellence and creativity.
Collaboration	We build internal and external relationships to achieve common goals and resolve differences.

In order to communicate and integrate the five values into day-to-day work activities and processes, the following six objectives were identified:

1. To create awareness about the refreshed Region of Waterloo Values

In order to create awareness of the refreshed values a brand was created to



identify and communicate the values. Central to the brand is an "S" which represents "service" and illustrates the central importance of service at the Region. Promotional materials were developed and implemented, e.g. stickers on the back of ID tags, cafeteria signs, grocery bags, lanyards for ID tags, etc.

2. Defining the behaviours for the Region of Waterloo Values

As awareness of the values grew a need was identified to clearly articulate the behaviours associated with each value, so there was consistent understanding of the actions associated with each value across this diverse organization. Defining each of the values into behaviour statements would also assist with the integration and alignment of the values into organizational practices and processes. The behaviours were based on feedback gathered from staff and were developed to help create a deeper knowledge of what the values look like in action. Mike personally attended five focus groups with staff to listen to their input in order to create clear, concise commitments which would resonate and help ensure that staff interact in consistent ways with citizens, colleagues and community partners.

3. To promote the behaviours throughout the year

In order to keep the focus on the values throughout the year, each value is highlighted every other month with several activities to keep them in the forefront. Examples include: a values bulletin, employee portal updates, tent cards in cafeterias, key note speakers etc.

4. To recognize staff who demonstrate the values

A recognition program has been developed called the Recognition Awards for Values Excellence (RAVE). RAVE provides an opportunity for staff to "rave" about fellow staff members who have demonstrated exceptional actions that exemplify the



Region of Waterloo values in their day-to-day work with colleagues, citizens/customers or community partners. This initiative was developed by a staff working group that was formed to develop actions based on results from an employee survey that was conducted in November 2008. Staff responses identified individual and team recognition as an area for improvement and the working group felt that recognizing staff who exemplify Regional values, would reinforce and acknowledge staff living the values and therefore help to integrate them into daily work.

5. To integrate values into day-to-day activities, practices and processes

Mike has lead a review of all organizational policies, processes and practices for value alignment in order to facilitate the continued movement of the Region towards a values based organization.

Some specific projects include:

- Integrate Service Strategy initiatives and messaging with values and behaviours.
- Incorporate the values into the employee recruitment and selection process.
- Refresh the Management Leadership Development Program curriculum for all new and current management staff to align with the Regional Values.

6. To measure progress and track success on values integration

Since discovering the public sector value chain research, Mike has invited the two researchers to present to management staff and has also consulted with them to develop a framework for measurement for staff as well as citizens.

In order to measure if staff and engaged and supported, Mike led an employee survey where 72 percent of staff participated and provided information on the values and priorities for the workplace. The results of the survey set a benchmark to measure progress over the upcoming years and most importantly helped to identify what is



working well with the values, and what needed to be improved. Staff have been engaged in developing actions to improve the work environment. Ongoing surveys will take place in order to track progress and monitor the benefits. The survey results are also benchmarked against other organizations.

The Region is also using the semi-annual performance development reviews with all staff to provide and solicit feedback on how well they are demonstrating the Regional Values.

The Region began the strategic planning process by engaging citizens to provide input on the culture and level of service satisfaction with Regional services. From the survey results it was identified that as a regional government we had room to improve in the areas of transparency and openness as well as follow-up with citizen issues. This citizen input provided a benchmark and a set of priorities for the corporate strategic plan and set the stage to link values to organizational excellence. Soliciting citizen input will continue to be implemented at both a corporate as well as program specific level in order to gauge how the public perceives staff demonstration of the Regional values.

In conclusion organizations need leaders who embody the organization's values through their actions and decisions so that staff are energized and inspired by values as well. When values are lived they shape and influence strategy and become the foundation to support the organization's success.

At the very core of it all, Mike Murray's leadership of embodying and implementing the Region's values has had a powerful influence over the way employees act, therefore shaping service excellence. He has created a culture that has made the values become meaningful, lasting and real to staff which is helping to improve citizen satisfaction with our services and increasing trust and confidence in government.

