ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2010 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 12, 2010

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with 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: Management Model including Sustainability Factors

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: Sedgwick County, Kansas

Jurisdiction population(s): 450,000

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, 2009, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: October Year: 2008

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in San José, California, October 2010. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Mr. William Buchanan

Title: County Manager Jurisdiction: Sedgwick County

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

Name: _____

Title:	_____	Jurisdiction:	_____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact:	Anthony Swartzendruber		
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Management Model including Sustainability Factors
ICMA 2010 Annual Awards Program
Supporting Narrative

Introduction

It is true that many policies and processes come after hard lessons have been learned. None can be truer than the assumption that a plan itself is the means to success. Similar to many other local governments, in 1992 Sedgwick County long made planning a priority. Sedgwick County discovered that to be successful in fulfilling its mission and accomplishing its strategic goals, the organization needed a process to ensure informed decision making. From that discovery, Sedgwick County implemented a formal strategic decision-making process with the following six steps: (1) define the issue or opportunity, (2) identify key stakeholders, (3) understand the current situation from all perspectives, (4) create a preferred future, (5) agree on measurable outcomes and develop a plan, and (6) monitor progress and make course corrections. This process, the Strategic Management Model, became the process by which decisions would be made at Sedgwick County.

What do you ask, have we done differently? We have changed the way we think and act. At the center of the Strategic Management Model is "sustainability," which Sedgwick County defines as "a commitment to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs by considering all of the following factors when forming policies and making program management decisions: economic development, environmental protection, institutional and financial viability, and social equity." Making decisions based on these factors helps Sedgwick County employees create an organization where decisions are based not only on what makes the most sense now, but what makes the most sense for the future as well.

Problem Assessment

Sedgwick County did not have a systematic approach to analyze the future implications of decisions. Sedgwick County was making decisions based on today, not tomorrow. Sedgwick County employees were recycling, but not minimizing paper use. Employees were saving gas by minimizing trips, but not carpooling and using hybrid vehicles. Sedgwick County offered internal training, but had no succession plan. Sedgwick County had a methodical system of providing services in an efficient and effective manner, but did not deliberately consider future environmental, economic, financial, or social impacts in all decisions.

Program Implementation and Costs

Based on research and discussion regarding other organizations' initiatives to address the necessity of sustainable practices, Mr. William Buchanan, County Manager, requested that the Sedgwick County Division of Human Resources bring employees together from across the organization to discuss steps to incorporate sustainability into decision making within the Sedgwick County organization. The County Manager's charge was to begin placing a stronger emphasis and focus on sustainability within our internal practices as a precursor to implementing community-wide sustainability policies in the future. From that process, the Sustainability Task Force was created in July 2007 to address how Sedgwick County could proactively address the factors of sustainability. The Sustainability Task Force defined the four factors of sustainability as follows:

- Economic development – The process of initiating, promoting, supporting, and facilitating the creation of wealth and employment opportunities (e.g. workforce development and buying local products and services).
- Environmental protection – Focuses on minimizing Sedgwick County government's impact on air, water and land (e.g. paper reduction, recycling, and hybrid cars).
- Institutional and financial viability – The process of making fiscally responsible decisions, while considering the present and future impact to the effectiveness of our organization (e.g. succession planning and wellness committee).

- Social equity – The equitable access to and distribution of public resources to the community, via education, partnership, and intervention (e.g. sliding fee scale and diversity training).

Through this process, the task force determined these factors are often interrelated. Rather than trying to find a balance among the factors, synergy is the goal, as balance often implies one factor must be decreased at the expense of another. The thought was that making decisions based on these factors would help create an organization where decisions are based not only on current needs, but how actions will affect the future of the organization.

Within a few months, the Sustainability Task Force members came to the conclusion that decision making was a pivotal point in which sustainability should be considered. To help departments develop policies and programs that focus on generating a more sustainable organization, the Sustainability Task Force recommended to the County Manager that "sustainability" be included in the Strategic Management Model. In turn, the four factors of sustainability were placed in the center of the Strategic Management Model: sustainability was to be considered in all decision-making processes. In addition, the four factors of sustainability were incorporated into all Strategic Management Model training classes. Decisions made at Sedgwick County—whether purchasing a new printer or setting social service agency fees or making capital improvement decisions—now incorporate sustainability.

County staff developed the Sustainability Task Force program internally. By utilizing existing staff and minimal office supplies, no hard costs were incurred. The development process was a combined effort of different departments incorporating best management practices from city and county governments from across the nation.

Tangible Results or Measurable Outcomes of the Program

One role of the Sustainability Task Force is to administer an annual survey to track organizational knowledge and employees' knowledge of sustainability. In 2007, prior to the inclusion of the four sustainability factors into the Management Model, 38 percent of employees had a familiar understanding of the concept of sustainability. In 2009, the number of employees increased to 59 percent. Also, in 2007, 57 percent of employees indicated they currently factor sustainability into their workplace decision-making; in 2009, the number increased to 66 percent.

Since inclusion into the Strategic Management Model in 2008, the sustainability factors have played a key role in the decision making process for all departments at one time or another. For example, in 2008, Sedgwick County purchased its first hybrid car. During 2009, staff monitored the cost of fuel and maintenance and met with departmental stakeholders to discuss the possibility of adding more hybrids to the fleet. As a result of the Strategic Management Model including sustainability, Sedgwick County now owns 14 hybrids, with another 10 scheduled for purchase in 2010. The average cost is $4,000 greater than a traditional fuel vehicle, but the increased cost is saved during the first few years of usage through decreased fuel and maintenance cost. Another result of incorporating sustainability into the Strategic Management Model includes the Public Works department using no-spill gas cans, which have an automatic shut-off to prevent gasoline spills and protect our environment. These gas cans are used for mowers, trimmers, and other small power tools. Also in 2009, the Division of Human Resources incorporated the Strategic Management Model process to create an online tuition reimbursement application process. Human Resources staff went through each step in the Strategic Management Model, considering each of the four sustainability factors. Their goal was to eliminate excess paperwork and create an electronic database for record keeping. The online system has achieved these goals by making sound, sustainable decisions that are equitable to all employees, while improving the efficiency of the application process and eliminating the need for paper throughout the entire process.

Lessons Learned During Planning, Implementation, and Analysis of the Program

Creating and maintaining sustainability as a priority throughout the organization has required focused change management efforts. The task force recognized educating employees is an important component, but at the end of the day, sustainability throughout the organization is an evolving concept whereby change will come incrementally and require time to implement.

Conclusion

Since Sedgwick County emphasizes and encourages the use of the Strategic Management Model in decision making and problem solving, sustainability is a natural fit at the center. The four factors of sustainability pertain to every department and play a direct or indirect role in nearly every decision. These four factors are arranged in a manner that shows they are of equal importance and that one factor should not be placed in a higher regard than another. Additionally, when the four are combined, there is synergy. While moving through each of the six steps of the Strategic Management Model, Sedgwick County leaders encourage the concept of sustainability be given adequate consideration and integrated into the decision-making process. This is consistent with the organization's mission of "providing for the present and future well-being of the citizens of Sedgwick County."