



The National Association of County Administrators

Idea Exchange

ICMA Annual Conference

Phoenix/Maricopa County, Arizona

Sunday October 7, 2012

➤ Introduction

- Peter Crichton, NACA President, welcomed members and guests, and offered gratitude to NACA sponsors.

Topics

1) Cutting Edge Budgeting Methodologies

- County A
 - Three years ago, they implemented program-based budgets knowing they would have to reduce funds and it has been very successful.
- County B
 - They redesigned their budget process to be flexible but focused on outcomes. The county allocation for each year was claimed up front, and then with the remainder they created their own fund balance which included the flexibility to create staff or programs. This redesign created more ownership, allowed people to see better ways to get things done. Meanwhile, there is also a traditional budget going on at the same time for regular services.
- County C
 - They are on their way to developing detailed measures and matrixed budgets. The plan is to use a balanced scorecard with detailed taxonomy with a template for the cascading of programs and subsets into measures and products. It will probably take years. They have had numerous reductions in force and services. They sent out surveys to see how things were in the community after these cuts. The surveys were submitted online and traditionally mailed. The survey results reiterated staff sentiments, minus differences of opinion on parks. They will be doing these surveys for another two years.
- County D

- They have a 21-member citizen budget oversight committee which is a cross representation of community and business leaders and community advocates. They are a tax-payer, bill-of-rights county and must have transparency. Government growth cannot be more than x% and they must follow that. The oversight committee also provides public assistance to the administration with program-based budgets. Having these community and business leaders involved reduces public dissention. Staff coordination is necessary. The outcomes and decisions are not different than what you and your staff would have developed. However, it gets the community involved and gets the public on board. In 2007, the committee put in 120 hours learning about the county and all the services provided. From there, they had a joint benchmark of understanding and were able to hear presentations from the county and departments. It greatly strengthened volunteer participation in the county, too. For example, when parks money was reduced, more people came out to volunteer in the parks because the decision had been made by community leaders.
- County E
 - They have built a program-based budget. All details must be shown in the budget: outcomes and mainstays. They also have a 29-member community board. However, it is still political. In Minnesota they have community conversations—they went to 12 communities over 6 months and asked community members to come together and then asked 4 questions basically stating, “Due to legislative changes, all Minnesota cities will be broke by 2015, so what do we fund and how do we pay for it?” High priority items came back as the main response (police and fire, public works, etc.). The League of Minnesota Cities website has more information.

2) Strategic Planning

- County A
 - They have done two five-year strategic plans that the community helped develop. From the first plan, they had 27 recommendations of which 80% were implemented. Many of these would have been done anyway, but it brings public support which makes implementation go smoothly. They also used a facilitator from a local university to assist with the strategic plan.
- County B
 - Strategic planning drives the budget. Use a facilitator. It is important to data crunch, have citizen surveys, and focus groups, and then have summits with a larger group. Include all the mayors and special principals of special districts. It is helpful to build a budget instead of cutting programs. They do a budget and evaluations every two years after elections.
- County C

- They have a five-member board that is dysfunctional, but they have a key facilitator who had found a goal of each member on which to move forward. These goals guide the budget and funds.
- County D
 - Facilitation with a local university is key. They also have a dysfunctional board. The strategic plan keeps the evaluation for the city administrators transparent.

3) Performance Appraisals and Compensation Programs for Management/ Confidential Employees

- County A
 - They have separated compensation from performance. They expect management to perform well so they take compensation off the table as wages are good to begin with.
- County B
 - Everything is done on performance and outcomes. The ratings are done on the employees' anniversary dates. The goals or outcomes are based on the flexible budget which creates programs. There are also discreet outcomes that employees are expected to accomplish by yearend which also dictate compensation. The outcomes and system are agreed upon by the employees and can be accepted or amended.
- County C
 - They eliminated steps and COLA for the executive tier. Then they looked at the steps and COLA of other employees and what that percentage is of their wages, then used that percentage as a possible merit-based, one-time bonus that could be earned by the executive tier. This way you are not increasing base pay in a tight budget mode.
- County D
 - The annual evaluations for merit-based pay of employees had to be cut based on the economy. However, it is a fair way to reward employees. 2000 was the last year they offered this.
- County E
 - Everyone is laying off and no one is getting raises.

4) Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Fire Fighters and EMS Providers

- County A
 - They have a very successful number of volunteer firefighters in their county. However, they are afraid they will lose them as they are overworked. They are going from volunteer to full-time.
- County B

- The fire chiefs' lobbying efforts are problematic. The county has a mix of private and volunteer groups—with the urban groups being unionized—who don't get along. The volunteer standards are increasingly getting to the same standards as the career. Basically, you must be a paid professional to meet the requirements.
- County C
 - EMS is handled through the hospital in this county. Firefighters do not want to do the EMT work—they want to fight fires. You do need a volunteer coordinator to keep up the licensing, accreditation, and requirements together.
- County D
 - The volunteer firefighter base disbanded as employers weren't supportive of the volunteers not being at work for a long time after a huge forest fire that took too long to put out. The sheriff is considering this to get a better ratio of response. For 27 years, they have had a contracted private provider run a countywide EMS agency which has reduced costs significantly. Currently, the new mayor wants to change this but the contract has worked well.
- County E
 - They have 15,000 people in the county. They only have volunteer firefighters because it is not a county program. But the county is very supportive of the firefighters and helps promote support for them.
- County F
 - 28,000 people live in the county and they have 3 million visitors every year. Their firefighter response time can be 5 minutes to 1.5 hours in very remote locations. Volunteer firefighters are hard to find. They provide call pay, insurance, and lots of incentives to support the volunteers who are willing to put in the time. They do have paid EMTs who are cross-trained, and they jump into the fire trucks. They have cross-training incentives. The county must provide for all the tourists which is a challenge: in the summer it can be 20 calls per day, versus 20 calls per week in a non-tourist season. The county has a full-time trainer who trains the EMTs and firefighters. They will pay for them to go to professional school in for more training, but they have to give back three to five years of service in exchange.

5) Consolidation of Services with Other Governmental Entities

- County A
 - It is important to be careful of whom you have has a customer or for whom you provide services so that turf wars don't ensue. The hassle isn't always worth the savings.
- County B
 - The county tends to go for the low-hanging fruit for these intergovernmental relationships. They work on contracts with neighboring cities.
- County C

- Their accountability improved after they amended their intergovernmental agreement to provide services for different entities, and then created an oversight committee made up of elected officials. These officials cleaned up the processes for the levels of services that were provided across entities. It is an advisory committee, but does have a vote and it operates on its own fees and revenues.
- County D
 - They have also had a similar oversight committee for intergovernmental affairs for over 40 years and it has worked well, though a new mayor wants to get rid of it.
- County E
 - Currently they share a communications center and some administrative people. In the last five years, they created a commission on joint services with the school superintendent, the county administrator, and the city administrator that meets once a month. They also provide some services (social services, etc.) on a contract basis through intergovernmental agreements to other counties since they are a larger county.
- County F
 - They have a human services commission between their two large cities and the county. They have pooled all the money for human services from all three governmental entities and then distribute from there. Also, there are 36 counties in Oregon and one county now supports over 20 of these with IT support and 26 counties use the animal services in this county.
- County G
 - They share a health and human services director with another county. The main desires of two towns in the county are so different they cannot get political unity from constituents, so they must stick to basic priorities.
- County H
 - Make sure people with whom you are contracting with want to be at the table. If they are coming in kicking and screaming, they are looking for problems.
- County I
 - As a manager of a small town, repairing fire plugs or stripes on the streets are major tasks, but the county can do this easier and cheaper. Smaller municipalities need different things.
- County J
 - Getting people to collaborate is hard and sometimes the players change and new players don't know the history of why the intergovernmental agreement exists to begin with.
- County K
 - New York has a coordinated assessment program (CAP) where municipalities receive aid from the state for consolidating programs. If you decide to break the

cap and contract during an agreement, that party must pay back the state or county. It helps with the turf war.

6) Workforce Trends

- County A
 - You cannot compete with the private sector. Some people are going to be drawn to the public sector and others are not.
- County B
 - They have brought back retirees to do part-time work and it has worked out well. Colorado is going to be a massive retiree state. Also, incentives for employees of different generations are tough – many older generations feel like younger people may not be as conscientious or detail-oriented.
- County C
 - One-third of the staff of 500 will retire in the next five years in their county. They are facing a new wave of entry-level hires, and finding and training current staff to move up internally. It does not work with social services roles but works in other departments.
- County D
 - In California you cannot bring a public employee back for part-time work for at least 6 months after retirement.
- County E
 - Baby boomers want something different than Gen X, Gen Y, or millennials. It is important to figure out what they want and what they each bring to the job.
- County F
 - No one can afford to retire due to retirement accounts plummeting.