



**STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN**  
**Enhancing an organization through a bunch of SAPs**

**Category:** Performance Excellence

**Jurisdiction:** City of Palm Coast, Florida

**Manager:** Jim Landon

**Innovation Award:** Yes, Please Consider for Award

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## SYNOPSIS

### Project Background:

During a time of drastic budget constraints and merit-increase freezes at the City of Palm Coast, Florida, City Manager Jim Landon embarked on an innovative and bold initiative to keep employees motivated, maintain a high quality of life in the City, and move the long-term vision of the Palm Coast City Council forward in a positive direction. This innovative initiative was the establishment of a unique, voluntary management program utilizing an inter-departmental, interdisciplinary team approach.

Through the Leadership Intern Training Experience (LITE) team concept, employees are provided the rare opportunity to work directly with the City Manager and other members of top management through a mentoring approach intended to develop additional capacity within the organization. The program concept further serves the City of Palm Coast City Council Strategic Action Plan for implementing the long-term Vision for the City of Palm Coast.

During the Fiscal Years of 2012-2013, seven (7) LITE teams were established.

1. 5-year Performance Report, City Council Goals, and Citizen Survey
2. High Performance Innovative City-Culture, Standards and Measures
3. Employee Academy & Training
4. Employee Motivation, Recognition and Retention
5. ½ Cent Surtax Campaign and Infrastructure
6. Florida Agricultural Museum
7. City Hall Feasibility



Through this unique management style, the City Manager recruited employees to serve as team leaders and members through an application process. Over the course of the last year, professional employees have experienced skill development by tackling challenges beyond their primary roles and expertise. This program has had a significant and extremely positive impact on the organization and has been acknowledged by the Florida City and County Management Association by recognizing City Manager Jim Landon for a Career Excellence Award for this innovative program.

This paper is written from the perspective of one of the seven team leaders. Through the direction of the City Manager, the following goals were set for one team and accomplished through this innovative management approach.

**5-year Performance Report, City Council Goals, and Citizen Survey  
(aka “Team Turtle”)**

1. Five-year Progress Report
2. 2011-2012 Citizen Survey
3. Secure a Facilitator
4. City Council Goal Setting Exercise
5. Bridge City Council Goals, Budget, Performance Measures and Training
6. Evaluate the overall process and develop a work plan for development and implementation

**Project Objective:**

On an annual basis, various reports and activities are conducted and delivered to City Council and Citizens to account for services, operations and strategy of pursuit of the City’s long-term Vision. Naturally, an organization possessing such a diverse workforce would tend to report with a focused interest that tends to create gaps and encourage an inconsistent message. The overriding goal of the Team’s objective was to bridge a closer relationship with implementing City Council’s Vision with the Fiscal Budget and Performance Measure processes. To further enhance this objective, the City Manager invited Team Leaders associated with performance measures and employee training to dually serve as participants on this project. The City Manager asked that one or more representative(s) from each of the City’s seven departments serve on the Team. Participant selection was left to the discretion of the Team Leader with final approval by the City Manager. The following products were delivered by Team Turtle. Hyperlinks to outside this document are provided to view the items, as applicable.

**Actions & Products Delivered:**

1. Team Kick-off meeting conducted on **February 23, 2012**
2. Department Surveys to Departments for projects associated with Pre-existing Goals [Constance Bentley, Christina Mugford, & Denise Bevan]: **Completed March 16, 2012**
3. LITE Program including “5-Year Performance Report, City Council Goals and Objectives, and Citizen Survey” Project Presentation: **Presentation to City Council on March 27, 2012**
4. Five-year Evaluation Report [Constance Bentley, Christina Mugford, Denise Bevan]. **Delivered and Presented to City Council on May 8, 2012**
5. City Council Interview Sessions: **May 15, 2012 – May 25, 2012**
6. Leadership Guide / City Council Goal Setting Exercise [Joe Roy, Constance Bentley, Denise Bevan]: **Completed first session on May 29, 2012**
7. Securing a Facilitator [Steve Flanagan, Jose Papa, Don Schragar]: **Utilized internal resources, Joe Roy with Business Assistance Center. Strategic Action Plan – consensus from Council on May 29, 2012**

8. Strategic Action Plan (Mission, Vision, Values, Goals, and Objectives) accepted by Council. [Joe Roy, Constance Bentley, Denise Bevan] **City Council Workshop conducted on July 10, 2012**
9. Citizen Survey Report. [Doug Akins, Jose Papa, Jerry Forte] **Delivered to City of Palm Coast on September 21, 2012**
10. Delivery of Strategic Action Plan (SAP) Journals to City Council [Constance Bentley & Denise Bevan] **November 6, 2012**
11. SAP Budget Elements for 2012/13 Budget Report. [Denise Bevan] **January 11, 2013**
12. Department/Team Approaches Completed for all Goals. **January 30, 2013**
13. Citizen Survey Presentation [Cindi Brownfield - Presenter, Denise Bevan, Constance Bentley, Jose Papa, Christina Mugford] **Presentation to City Council on February 26, 2013**
14. Bridging Performance Measures with Strategic Action Plan (SAP) [Jerry Forte, Denise Bevan, Doug Akins]. **March 7, 2013 (Master Document)**
15. Draft SAP Placemats and Posters [Constance Bentley, Denise Bevan, Renee Shevlin]. **March 4, 2013**
16. 2011/12 Progress Report [Denise Bevan - Presenter, Constance Bentley, Jose Papa, Christina James] **Delivered to City Council on June 11, 2013**
17. SAP Evaluation - City Council interviews conducted with staff. [Denise Bevan, Constance Bentley, Christina Mugford, Beau Falgout] **July 2013**
18. SAP Executive Summary Annual Evaluation and potential City Council Consensus [Denise Bevan - Presenter, Constance Bentley, Christina Mugford, Beau Falgout] **Delivered to Council July 30, 2013**

#### **Costs and Savings:**

The total cost for the project primarily rested with material costs for printed products. The use of in-house talent yielded a direct savings by eliminating a Facilitator from the Goal-setting exercise over the course of two fiscal years at an estimated cost of \$16,000.00. The City of Palm Coast has performed a Citizen Survey for the past 10 years with a cost of \$10,300.00 for 2012. With this basic baseline cost, the project cut costs by approximately 60%. In 2012, Palm Coast saved more than \$2.2 million by doing work in-house through many different operational initiatives.

### **Innovative Characteristics and Outcomes:**

The cross-pollination of Team Leaders between the following teams created a cohesive bond to foster improvement of many different initiatives. We used the innovative combination of perspectives to cultivate a new process that now radiates through the organization.

1. 5-year Performance Report, City Council Goals, and Citizen Survey (Team Turtle)  
Team Leader: Denise Bevan, Senior Environmental Planner
2. High Performance Innovative City-Culture, Standards and Measures (High Maintenance)  
Team Leader: Jerry Forte, Deputy Fire Chief
3. Employee Academy & Training (EAT Team)  
Team Leader: Constance Bentley, Land Development Supervisor
4. Employee Motivation, Recognition and Retention (BAM Team)  
Team Leader: Mirna Crimi, Information Technology Senior Support Specialist

Innovation takes growth, investment and some level of risk. This project brought together employees of all different talents, working and learning styles, to brainstorm and synergize from all different perspectives with one common goal – to better the City in the service of Citizens. When considering the diversity of Team Leaders, the project truly created a melting pot of contributors.

By establishing these key stakeholders, key participants conveyed unique knowledge and experience of their respective teams. This dually served as a strong foundation for establishing a clearinghouse of information for the Five-Year Performance Report and Goal-setting implementation strategies. A synergy between these particular teams produced an exponential investment in the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) process and within the individual teams' cultures.

Examples of unique experiences generated through the SAP processes are shown below.

- Empowering staff with an opportunity to create and manage critical processes for the organization
- Encouraging leadership roles beyond core staff responsibilities through the team concept
- Expanding awareness of the City's structure and complexity of operations
- Facilitating an opportunity for staff to work directly with City Council members and the City Manager
- Generating a "Workforce Talent" Goal for the first time within the Strategic Action Plan that focuses on the needs of City personnel. This element of the plan houses support and direction associated with the remaining three teams beyond Team Turtle
- Securing comprehensive support from City Council and City Management for the modified process and long-term implementation
- Discovering in-house resources for project utilization that resulted in cost reduction and stronger products

**Obstacles:**

A Strategic Action Plan is a common-place tool for corporations and most organizations; however, it is a plan for the future and success lies with implementation. Such a process is known to be time-consuming and can drain an organization, especially when resources are scarce. In the upcoming year(s), staff will be evaluating the process to ensure that reporting efficiency is enhanced and the organization remains supportive. People have a tendency to resist such plans simply because it doesn't make sense. Routine reinforcement through internal training will be critical to retain the integrity of the process to ensure a consistent message.

**Applicable Results and Real World Practicality:**

The SAP process was developed through a bottom-up approach that was engineered from a front-line perspective. Reporting and tracking progress is sometimes viewed as a fruitless effort. The numbers go into the machine, but what does it mean to me? Each organization is different and picking the “right” process is critical. The City of Palm Coast has developed a rigid process that has meshed a closer relationship between critical actions vital to the successful implementation. Within a government organization, this is difficult to achieve primarily due to the diversity of operations and focused expertise across all departments. Beyond the essential nature of a long-term plan, the byproducts of a Team approach yielded professional growth, motivated staff eager to use undiscovered talents, and overall pride in the organization. Home-grown reports serve as an opportunity to reach out to Citizens and highlight the diversity and passion of the organization.

**Presentation Style:**

We will use a Prezi presentation format to give a general overview of the process and program results. This presentation will include several short video presentations that will feature products and inaugural actions taken to implement the plan throughout the organization. Presenters will highlight a very innovative approach through positive points of view by a bunch of SAPs.

*“We were a bunch of SAPs of taking the bait on being project leaders, and in the end, we remain a bunch of SAPs (Suddenly Awakened Professionals).” ~ Denise Eagle Bevan*