



## **Presentation Title: Pursuing Excellence in Permitting Programs**

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### **I. Formative Evaluation – Planning**

Beginning in 2008 revenues from permitting programs in Kitsap County dropped to a level that could not sustain staffing levels. Subsequently the department laid off 1/3 of its review and inspection staff (22 FTEs) and reduced hours of remaining staff to between .8 and .9 FTE. By 2012 permitting activity had increases by more than 15% but the department did not have funding to restore staffing. Permitting processes were broken, staff was demoralized and we could no longer meet the expectations of our staff, our customers or our elected officials. The department set out on a nine-month exercise with the objectives to 1- Build a “Nordstrom’s” quality level permitting program, 2- Exceed the expectations of all permitting process users. Formative evaluation included:

- Establishing “Fact vs. Story” by extensively mining existing paper and electronic tracking systems to quantify key metrics like turnaround time, staff hours, workload by types of permits, variability of lead times and why permits were being returned.
- Identifying core businesses by examining historical data and trends.
- Identifying key stakeholders (including staff) and conducting personal interviews to find out what really mattered to them and what actions they thought were needed.
- Researching key indicators in similar jurisdictions to establish benchmarks.
- Identifying effective customer satisfaction input methodologies.
- Identifying skill and training gaps for later program implementation.

### **II. Process Evaluation – Implementation**

Much of the formative evaluation work occurred during the first three months of 2012. Work in process implementation and evaluation caused us to frequently return to the information obtained in the formative process. The keystone for the process improvement consisted of a week-long intensely focused process improvement event followed by immediate implementation beginning in August of 2012. Key process evaluations and metrics included:

- Establishing a program charter identifying exactly what we were trying to do, what was included and what was not together with key champions, leaders, facilitators and stakeholders committed to work through the process.
- Identifying and obtaining training and assistance to bridge process skill gaps.
- Identifying a current state process map and an ideal state process (value) map.
- Conducting root cause analysis of key problematic issues like process bottlenecks, poor information submitted for review and impediments to change.
- Creating a method of regular reporting to staff, leaders, elected officials and stakeholders.
- Publishing key indicators and customer satisfaction survey results.

- A redesign of physical plant and customer lobby to support ideal process state.
- Identification of visual controls to track and manage processes.
- Systematic process for updating procedures, policies forms and submittal documents.

### **III. Impact Evaluation – Short Term Results**

The impacts of implementing the program exceeded our objectives and expectations. By the 90 day report out:

- Turnaround times (days in review) were reduced from 26 days to 8, (a 69% reduction).
- First pass yields (permits approved on the first submittal) went from 4% to 51%.
- Critical decisions points in the process were reduced by 75% from 16 to 4.
- Rework loops were reduced similarly from 16 to 4.
- Physical plant rearrangement reduced staff travel distances to review and issue permits by 95% from 1,832 feet traveled per permit to 90 feet.

### **IV. Outcome Evaluation – Long Term Results**

Specific metrics have been maintained and improved upon since the programs initial implementation. Other positive outcomes include:

- Overall customer satisfaction ratings maintained above 76%.
- Workload increases approaching 20% have been absorbed without additional staffing adding to the department's long-term fiscal stability.
- Marked increases in staff morale with positive employee engagement and satisfaction ratings of 75%.
- Similar process evaluation studies have been conducted for other department processes (inspections, code enforcement and land use reviews) with similar results.
- The department's process improvement model is being implemented county-wide with performance metrics included and required for budgeting.

### **Recommendations for others:**

Our Lessons learned include:

- Create a sense of urgency to improve and take action.
- Obtain critical support from leadership, elected officials, stakeholders and staff.
- Be transparent in program development, implementation and metric reporting.
- Look at processes from customer perspectives and maintaining staffing stability.
- Create a culture of trust, individual responsibility and risk taking without reprisal for trying something new.

### **Conclusions:**

The program is a success and the methodology has been used to produce significant positive results in our building inspection, code compliance and land use review programs. Once started, staff has owned the program with frequent and almost daily process improvements occurring on a planned and an ad-hoc basis.