

Practice Name:**Date Created:** 26-May-09**Author:****Last Updated:****Abstract:****GENERAL INFORMATION**

Name of Practice	INNOVATION AND COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE
Date	9-July-08
Name of Municipality	TOWN OF HARDISTY
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THE ISSUE**Abstract:**

Using innovation and community governance principles to support and develop a small municipality.

What is the practice you developed or are developing (brief abstract)?

Please briefly describe the final practice developed. (e.g. if you developed a new Council agenda, list the agenda items, or if a new communications plan was created, provide a summary of the plan's goals, objectives and

highlights.)

Need:

Please describe (just a couple of sentences or bullet points) why you needed to create this practice (policy or process).

What issue made it necessary? (e.g. “We needed a comprehensive plan to deal with...”, or “We needed an annual forecasting tool because...”)

The Town needed to re-tool and think strategically to obtain a degree of sustainability for its future growth and development. The practice of innovation and support of community governance principles greatly enhances our abilities to become more sustainable.

CREATING YOUR PRACTICE

Research:

How did you obtain information to help design your practice (including consultation with stakeholders, formal and informal research)?

Please include any research documentation you can share, or give us a source reference (e.g. Web site, literature, “We reviewed the bylaws from other municipalities in the area...”).

Process:

How did you go about designing your practice? For instance, did you create a team, hire a consultant, borrow something ready-made from another jurisdiction?

Describe briefly who did the design work and what process they followed.

With the completion of the U of A Local Government Administration Certificate, one of the courses of study was that of Community Sustainability. A portion of this study was incorporated into our strategic planning process as well as reviewing practices of other mid sized communities across Canada.

From prior experiences in other levels of Government, I brought forward a strategic planning process that was used to re-tool our municipality and was used with Council and Staff. I developed the strategic planning process in-house and encouraged innovative thinking at the Council and Staff level to further our municipality.

GETTING APPROVAL FOR YOUR PRACTICE

Authority:

Whose/what approval did you need to create and implement the practice?

Council approval was received January 2006 to re-tool the municipality by re-writing policy, bylaws and developing a strategic plan that involved community input, which was tied to final budget deliberations. This innovative process is now used annually.

Reporting:

How did you inform the decision-maker(s) about the practice and your need for their approval?

Please note the name of any documents provided to the decision-makers that you would be willing to share.

I have worked in small communities before and I brought years of experience with me. I informed Council of the day that we needed to re-tool our municipality by planning strategically, establishing capital reserves and move towards being a policy run organization. Council was very supportive and continue to be to this day.

Consultation:

Did you consult with stakeholders as part of your approval process?

If so, how? If possible, attach a copy of templates, surveys or other documents you used as part of your consultation.

Yes. Engaging the community and various stakeholders was extremely important. Once these groups saw the plan laid out, they realized how they could assist adjusting their planning to support the achieving of the overall community goals.

The public and various community groups were invited to the presentation of the draft strategic plan and were asked to provide both written and verbal feedback on how we could work together to accomplish the goals and objectives stated.

IMPLEMENTING YOUR PRACTICE

Plan:

Describe the process you went through to implement the practice. If you used an implementation plan, please note it here.

Once Council participated in the Strategic Planning process, a public meeting was held to review the draft plan for input. Community groups were consulted with as well as part of this process to learn how they could participate in achieving the various community goals. The final plan was completed and tied to the budget development process. At year end, another public meeting is held to review the plan and provide a report card to the community on how well we did and to celebrate our completions as a community and to answer questions on items that were deferred or delayed to the following year.

Policy:

What changes to bylaws, regulations or procedures were needed to implement this practice and how did you deal with them?

Please attach a copy of the change in bylaw, policy or procedure.

As Council has moved to a policy run municipality, direction is given to Administration through resolution and budget to implement the approved plan. Any policies or bylaw introductions or amendments that were required were recommended by Administration for Council approval. As an example, we have a Policy on creating polices which lays out how new policies are introduced. All approved policies are on our website for public viewing.

When:

When did your municipality begin to use the practice?
Was it implemented all at once or in stages?

The practice of being innovative and really supporting community governance principles started in January 2006 and has evolved over the past couple of years. I feel each year the report card was presented to the community, it brought a substantial amount of credibility to the municipality in that it strongly demonstrated a willingness to work with and support the entire community. The Town is now at the point where individuals and organizations want to work with the Town as they see the benefit of working together as opposed to working on their own. More can be accomplished by working together.

Who:

Who was responsible for implementing the practice?

If someone else is responsible for ongoing management, who is it?

I believe it was shared between our Elected Councilors and their relationships with other Community Groups in Town and Administration in implementing the strategic plan using innovative budget planning and project management to achieve desired goals. Largely, though, the CAO is the quarterback.

RESOURCES REQUIRED**Budget:**

How much did it cost you to design and implement your practice (i.e. We saved/spent \$XX per year)?

What are your ongoing operational and capital costs, if any?

The Town did not look at this change as a cost, but as a way to think strategically and find creative ways to get more things accomplished for less. By working together in innovative ways, we have accomplished more. As an example, the Town commissioned an Engineering Study on our Arena/Curling Rink Complex and found that we had significant fire and life safety issues to the tune of \$1.2 million in retrofits. The Town applied for \$500,000 and received funding support from Alberta Lotteries. Instead of funding the remaining portion with only tax dollars, the community groups banded together to assist the Town and provide over \$300,000.00 towards the project.

Staff:

What human resources did you need to design, implement and manage your practice? (e.g. "It took X staff member (s) X months on this" or "This is part of normal staff duties.")

I simply made the overall process shared amongst all staff. I also encourage all staff to think outside the box and if there are new, more efficient ways of doing current practice, that we discuss and implement the change. Council is very supportive.

Infrastructure:

What "capital costs" (such as information technology, other equipment or building assets) did you

need to design, implement, manage, and/or evaluate your practice?

No capital costs were incurred to implement the practice. But by being innovative and working with community groups, the Town has been able to reduce its required capital spending on required infrastructure upgrades in the community.

EVALUATING YOUR PRACTICE

Formal:

If you did a formal evaluation (e.g. user satisfaction survey, analysis of annual expenditures or number of rate payers served) for your practice, please describe the evaluation tool and the process used.

Tell us who was involved.

The Town produces a Monthly newsletter that is sent out to every household in the community. In the issue we outline and provide space for all community groups to identify upcoming events etc. In some issues we have printed surveys to complete, and in the past have used online surveys as well. What we have found works for our community is the formal public presentation at an open house where the financial statements are presented, including updates on the strategic plan and how we as a community collective, were able to accomplish and in some cases exceed our objectives set for the year. Ratepayers love accountability and seeing their tax dollars stretched.

Informal:

If you did an informal evaluation, describe what you did (such as discussing the practice with people in the office or on the street, or letters/comments received).

All staff, both inside and outside staff are hired and orientated on the importance of good customer relations and are fully briefed on the importance of innovation, community governance and completing objectives in our strategic plan. When ratepayers interact with all of my staff, they are treated with respect and are 9 out of 10 times, the receipt of positive feedback. We are quickly becoming known as a community that gets things done.

Performance measures:

Please list the performance measures for this practice (i.e. reduced number of complaints, money saved, or change in equipment life expectancy.)

Arena Retrofit project is a \$1.2 million dollar project. If the Town did not receive support from other community groups, they would have had to raise \$500K through tax dollars to match the Alberta Lottery portion. As a result of local support, the Town only needs to transfer out of reserves \$200K.

Please list the process you used for measuring performance, (i.e. We do annual surveys on...) examples include:

- collecting data
- establishing a baseline
- applying the measures
- results
- follow up

The Town has other examples to show if required, but they are all tied to developing a program or contributing towards a project, but financing it through innovative techniques and community group support and encouragement.

Changes:

(a) Based on the evaluation (formal or informal), describe any changes you have made, or would like to make, to your practice as a result. (e.g. "After implementing this practice, we decided that it would be better if...")

-or-

(b) Has your practice met your expectations and if so, how?

Honest and open communication with the ratepayers and all community groups is extremely important. It allows for easy buy in when everyone knows the collective plan is too make Hardisty the best it can be and to plan for sustainable growth.

I believe our practice has met our expectations and has made believers in our community, whom were quite frankly used to the status quo and nothing getting done here. We have become a leader in our region and look forward to pushing the envelope to grow our Town.

LESSONS LEARNED / BENEFITS RECEIVED**Benefits:**

What are the benefits of this practice to your municipality? (eg. Preparation of Council agenda packages now requires less time, etc.)

The support of community governance principles allows us to coordinate and get people and groups working together for the common community good. It is very effective in communicating and cost-sharing of capital projects and that of various recreational programs and services.

Key Lessons:

What key lessons have you/your municipality learned through the process of:

- designing;
- obtaining approval;
- implementing; and
- evaluating your practice?

Include any problems, surprises, and unanticipated benefits. (e.g. "We realized that we needed to spend more time...")

Effective Communication is essential. Make sure some of the objectives listed in the strategic plan are achievable so the community can celebrate milestones along the way. If everything listed is a 3-5 year reachable, it will not work. You need far reaching goals, but mixed with some achievables early to build on the momentum.

Having Council and Staff involved in the Strategic Planning process greatly helps keep everyone on the same page and focuses everyone on the yearly plan of projects and programs that need to be in place by year end.

Involving the public early in the process by reviewing draft plans and objectives, confirming in written form what the final plan is, and then providing for an honest review of the report card at a public meeting embraces accountability back to the people. It greatly enhances credibility of the municipality and effectively motivates others to want to help be a part of community growth and sustainability.

Advice to Municipal Peers:

What advice would you give to another municipality that is considering adopting your practice? Is there anything you might have done differently?

Communicate openly that your municipality can not do everything or be everything for every person. It is okay to ask for assistance from groups and individuals and it does not show weakness, but rather strength in knowing that it takes innovative community spirit to build a sustainable municipality.

PRACTICE UPDATES**New Information:**

There may be some new information to add since this practice was first posted. This is especially true if:

- a new process has been implemented in your municipality;
- there are new practice evaluation results; or
- there has been a change affecting organizational direction. For example, explain how new economic conditions or a new vision/strategy affect the practice.

Please indicate those changes here. Don't forget to list any new documents that may be useful to your peers. Then go to "Other Information" to attach the new documents.

Our Strategic Plan and report card of past completions is located on our website at www.hardisty.ca

OTHER INFORMATION**Suggestions:**

Please list relevant information sources that others might use or you would be willing to share (courses, Web sites, literature, experts).

Information can be sent in digital form upon request to tonykcao@hardisty.ca

Planning documents and policies are located on our website at www.hardisty.ca

Documents & Attachments:

Please attach (using the "Browse" button below) any documents you would be willing to share with others interested in your practice (e.g. a bylaw, a policy, approval documents, templates).

* Note: If you do not have an electronic copy of a document, please send Municipal Excellence a paper copy for scanning to:

Alberta Municipal Affairs
Municipal Excellence Network
17th Floor, Commerce Place
10155-102 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5J 4L4

Nominations:

Do you have any suggestions of other individuals or municipalities with municipal practices that we should

add to the Municipal Excellence network? Please list their practice, municipality, and contact information.

Or, e-mail menet@gov.ab.ca and let us know about a municipal colleague that has a really good way of doing things.

COMMENTS

Have we missed something; anything you'd like to add to the areas we have touched on, or an area we have not mentioned?

The Town of Hardisty is very open to sharing with other smaller municipalities. If you need assistance, please call any one of my staff.

Tony Kulbisky, CAO
Town of Hardisty