

MUNICIPAL EXCELLENCE NETWORK
PRACTICE COLLECTION FORM

General Information

Date	July 14, 2009
Name of Practice	Call2Order
Name of Municipality	County of Wetaskiwin No. 10
Your Name and Title	Lynn Weed, Director of Information Services
Phone Number	780-352-3321
Fax Number	780-352-3486
E-mail for Practice Contact(s)	lweed@county.wetaskiwin.ab.ca
Mailing Address	Box 6960 Wetaskiwin, Alberta T9A 2G5

INTRODUCTION

When completing this form, use your own words and share your practice in a story format. Please do not include any derogatory comments. Use paragraphs and bullet points to organize your practice. This is not a business case but instead is intended to be informative for your peers, showing them the processes and outcomes of your practice. Be sure to focus on what you learned so that it is helpful to the reader. Click on the grey boxes to type in your answers. The boxes will expand as you type.

THE ISSUE

Question	Answer
<p>Abstract: <u>What</u> is the practice you developed or are developing (brief abstract)?</p> <p>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.)</p>	<p>In partnership with Town of High River and Bellamy Software, the County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 developed a meeting management system which automates the workflow for meeting process from the creation of the agenda topic to the publishing of meeting minutes and follow-up tasks.</p> <p>The goals of the project were to create agendas in a timely manner, automate the minute taking process, improve accessibility to Council, management and the public, reduce the paper waste and staff workload, and create an electronic document storage and retrieval system.</p>

	<p>The objectives of this practice were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve service to the public by providing a more direct communicative tool by providing anytime, anywhere access to agendas and minutes. • Improve governance by providing elected officials with anytime, anywhere access to agenda and minute information for decision making. • Increase productivity for staff and elected officials by providing an electronic storage and retrieval system, with full search capabilities. • Improve productivity for staff by automating the minute taking process.
<p>Need: Please describe (just a couple of sentences or bullet points) <u>why</u> you needed to create this practice (policy or process).</p> <p>What issue made it necessary? (e.g. “We needed a comprehensive plan to deal with...”, or “We needed an annual forecasting tool because...”)</p>	<p>County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 Administration recognized the need to automate the labor intensive manual meeting management process that inhibited communication, flow of information, decision making, productivity and governance.</p> <p>The County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 addressed this issue through its Strategic Planning process by identifying the need for a long-term vision for a comprehensive meeting management system that would improve communication, provide better access to information for decision making, increase efficiencies and enhance the democratic process within the municipal body.</p> <p>A tool was required to manage the meeting workflow to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide secure, anytime, anywhere access to agenda information for Councillors, staff and the public, and particularly those Councillors located a substantial distance from the County office. • Be more environmentally friendly by reducing the amount of paper used when providing agenda packages. • Automate the workflow for the administrative staff preparing the agenda packages. • Expedite process to publish agendas and minutes for the public.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the ability to store, search and retrieve information from past meetings. • Provide better access to information to enhance decision making.
--	---

CREATING YOUR PRACTICE

<p>Research: How did you obtain information to help design your practice (including consultation with stakeholders, formal and informal research)?</p> <p>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...”).</p>	<p>The County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 implemented an on-line agenda which was accessed by elected officials and staff on a secure section of the website in 2002. Upon review of the project, staff realised it had not addressed the workflow for meeting management or provided public access.</p> <p>As a result of this review, research of the marketplace was conducted and it was found that there were no cost effective options that automated the entire workflow for meeting management.</p> <p>A consultant was then approached for advice on websites, remote communication, and other hardware and software requirements. In collaboration with the consultant, vision and functional requirements studies were developed for the project. The vision and functional requirements were presented to potential partner municipalities for consideration of participation in the project.</p>
<p>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?</p> <p>Describe briefly who did the design work and what process they followed.</p>	<p>A partnership was established with the Town of High River, Bellamy Software, and the County of Wetaskiwin No. 10. A review of the meeting workflow was completed, using information from both municipalities and other resources, and a design and implementation plan was developed. (See attached Meeting Management Flowchart)</p>

GETTING APPROVAL FOR YOUR PRACTICE

<p>Authority: Whose/what approval did you need to create and implement the practice?</p>	<p>The partnership of the Town of High River, County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 and Bellamy Software developed a budget for the meeting management project, and approval was received from the Council/Board of each of the organizations.</p>
---	--

	<p>The partners applied for grant funding through the Municipal Sponsorship Program and the innovative project was awarded funding.</p>
<p>Reporting: How did you inform the decision-maker(s) about the practice and your need for their approval?</p> <p>Please note the name of any documents provided to the decision-makers that you would be willing to share.</p>	<p>Each partner reported to their respective Board/Council on an ongoing basis, as the project proceeded.</p>
<p>Consultation: Did you consult with stakeholders as part of your approval process?</p> <p>If so, how? If possible, attach a copy of templates, surveys or other documents you used as part of your consultation.</p>	<p>The partnership members consulted with internal stakeholders in all three organizations. These consultations included discussions regarding system requirements and a review of internal processes for meeting management. Part of this process was to identify and meet the specific needs of a municipal setting.</p> <p>The design and implementation plan for Call2Order was developed based on requirements of internal stakeholders (elected officials/staff) and the desire to improve communication with external stakeholders, including municipal ratepayers, media and other interested parties.</p>

IMPLEMENTING YOUR PRACTICE

<p>Plan: Describe the process you went through to implement the practice. If you used an implementation plan, please note it here.</p>	<p>The development plan for Call2Order included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product design. • Product development and testing. • Implementation and training. • Project review. • On-going collaboration with users to ensure product is refined to meet unique demands. • Collaborative, reactive approach.
<p>Policy: What changes to bylaws, regulations or procedures were needed to implement this practice and how did you deal with them?</p> <p>Please attach a copy of the change in bylaw, policy or procedure.</p>	<p>There were no changes required to bylaws or regulations. However, some internal procedures for agenda preparation and distribution were changed to improve the workflow of information.</p>

<p>When: When did your municipality begin to use the practice? Was it implemented all at once or in stages?</p>	<p>The beta version of the Call2Order software was installed in the Town of High River and the County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 in February, 2008. Both municipalities implemented the software in stages, by using the tool on small internal meetings first, and then rolling the tool to formal meetings one meeting type at a time. This includes: Directors Meetings, Library Board, Ambulance Authority, Council, Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, Joint Economic Development Initiative and Health and Safety.</p> <p>This phased approach allowed for training in smaller groups creating an internal mentorship environment. Specialized training sessions were provided for elected officials and staff on an individual and group basis. On-hand technical support is provided on an ongoing as required basis.</p> <p>The public was notified of the communication tool through the County of Wetaskiwin No. 10's Fall 2008 Resident Newsletter and the 2009 Tax Insert. (copy attached)</p> <p>Regular meetings continue to be held with system users to collaborate on refining the product and processes.</p>
<p>Who: Who was responsible for implementing the practice?</p> <p>If someone else is responsible for ongoing management, who is it?</p>	<p>Each municipality identified a person as project coordinator, and this person was responsible for the implementation and the ongoing management for that organization.</p> <p>Bellamy Software continues to fill the role of consultant and developer and provides software support.</p>

RESOURCES REQUIRED

<p>Budget: How much did it cost you to design and implement your practice (i.e. We saved/spent \$XX per year)?</p> <p>What are your ongoing operational and capital costs, if any?</p>	<p>The budget for the development of the Call2Order meeting management tool was split amongst all three partners. A portion of the project cost was funded through the Municipal Sponsorship Program.</p> <p>The initial agreement between the partners, Town of High River and County of Wetaskiwin No. 10, and Bellamy Software, provides for software support.</p>
---	---

	This software has been made available for purchase to other stakeholders throughout western Canada.
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.”)	The design and implementation plan portion of the Call2Order project was completed in conjunction with staff from all three organizations. A group was organized to test the project, prior to implementation which was part of normal staff duties. The discussion group continues to collaborate on refining the product.
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?	The Call2Order meeting management software was designed to work on all platforms, and therefore, was installed without additional hardware investment. The strength of this tool is that no capital costs or hardware changes are required.

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.	<p>The partners continue to evaluate and review the Call2Order meeting management tool through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 Strategic Planning process. • Informal, ongoing feedback is obtained from users of the tool which is compiled and documented. • The meeting management tool has also been demonstrated to other organizations that have provided feedback which has been included in the refining process. As Call2Order evolves through utilization by partners and other organizations, additional requirements will be identified and implemented. <p>There was no formal evaluation done at this time with the public; however one will be done later this year, once the public interface implementation is completed.</p>
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).	The County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 has conducted regular staff meetings to discuss the project, provide training and feedback opportunities.

<p>Performance measures: Please list the performance measures for this practice (i.e. reduced number of complaints, money saved, or change in equipment life expectancy.)</p> <p>Please list the process you used for measuring performance, (i.e. We do annual surveys on...) examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ collecting data ▪ establishing a baseline ▪ applying the measures ▪ results ▪ follow up 	<p>The Call2Order Meeting Management software has reduced the amount of supplies and staff time required to produce and distribute paper copies of the agenda package. The County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 no longer generates paper copies of the agenda for Council.</p> <p>It has also reduced the distribution time to Council, by providing elected officials access to the agenda anytime, anywhere and they can track the preparation of the agenda and review items at their leisure.</p>
<p>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...”)</p> <p>-or-</p> <p>(b) Has your practice met your expectations and if so, how?</p>	<p>The Call2Order meeting management process has automated the meeting management workflow. After implementing this practice, we have fine-tuned some of the internal processes to improve efficiency, but have found the meeting management software has exceeded the expectations.</p> <p>The partners are currently reviewing the possibility of enhancing the program to include bylaws, in an effort to further improve communication and access to information for both internal and external stakeholders.</p>

LESSONS LEARNED / BENEFITS RECEIVED

<p>Benefits: What are the benefits of this practice to your municipality? (eg. Preparation of Council agenda packages now requires less time, etc.)</p>	<p>Benefits for this practice include:</p> <p>Improved Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The improved service provides better access to information for decision making for Council and Administration, enhancing governance. <p>Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council, Administration and Staff access to Council meeting information in a secure environment, anytime, anywhere has enhanced governance. ▪ Council can view items approved for specific agendas immediately upon approval. <p>Productivity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction in the amount of supplies and staff time required to produce and distribute paper copies of agenda packages has increased productivity.
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to search and retrieve information from any meeting, with full search capabilities for all platforms, providing a more efficient method of accessing information. ▪ Manages issues, actions and resolutions. ▪ Automates creation of agendas and minutes and allows for items to be created and posted to a specific agenda weeks or months in advance. <p>Conditions in the Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Automates publishing of agendas and minutes to the website allowing for improved communication with the public.
<p>Key Lessons: What key lessons have you/your municipality learned through the process of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ designing; ▪ obtaining approval; ▪ implementing; and ▪ evaluating your practice? <p>Include any problems, surprises, and unanticipated benefits. (e.g. “We realized that we needed to spend more time...”)</p>	<p>Key lessons learned during this process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The planning process is one of the most important phases in the process. All levels of the organization should be included in the planning phase to ensure “buy-in” for the project. • “Buy-in” from all levels is important, however, top-level (administration and Council) support is crucial to the success of the project. • On-going training for both elected officials and staff is critical for the success of the project and adequate time must be allowed for each individual to reach the end of the learning curve. • Administrative support staff requires mentoring and time as they are learning to use the new tool. It is important for administration to allow the time required for the staff to learn the tool. • Opportunity to incorporate user feedback led to better product. <p>While this tool was originally designed for use in the municipal environment, we have found that the tool is appropriate for any organization that wishes to track formal or informal meetings. This could include school boards, charitable organizations, provincial departments, etc.</p>

<p>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?</p>	<p>It is important to develop a design and implementation plan in collaboration with all stakeholders. The implementation of the plan must be completed in stages to provide the key users with the opportunity to become comfortable with each stage of the project. Design your project to attain small successes that are visible to the stakeholders.</p>
--	---

PRACTICE UPDATES

<p>New Information: There may be some new information to add since this practice was first posted. This is especially true if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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. <p>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.</p>	
---	--

OTHER INFORMATION

<p>Suggestions: Please list relevant information sources that others might use or you would be willing to share (courses, Web sites, literature, experts).</p>	<p>Information sources included IBM, Sylogist Ltd (Bellamy Software Division), and MicroAge Solutions (Edmonton).</p>
<p>Documents & Attachments: Please list any documents you would be willing to share with others interested in your practice (e.g. a bylaw, a policy, approval documents, templates).</p> <p>* Note: Most documents can be electronically attached to your practice in the MEnet database. If only a paper version of your document is available, please send it with your completed Practice Collection Form. We will scan it and attach it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting Management Flowchart • Call2Order Information Brochure • Notice to Public in County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 Fall 2008 Resident Newsletter • Notice to Public in County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 2009 Tax Insert
<p>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.</p> <p>Or, e-mail menet@gov.ab.ca and let us know about a municipal colleague that has a really good way of doing things.</p>	

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?	
---	--

Thank you for your contribution to the Municipal Excellence network.

Please e-mail your completed submission by noon on **July 15, 2009** to menet@gov.ab.ca in order to be eligible for the 2009 Minister's Award for Municipal Excellence.
