

2016 COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS APPLICATION BEST PRACTICES, Organizational Development & Improvements

Filled Friday, June 17, 2016

Name of Local Government

The Corporation of the Village of Salmo

Project/Program Manager Name

Diane Kalen-Sukra

Title

Chief Administrative Officer

Phone

250-357-9433

Email

cao@salmo.ca

Administrative Contact Name

Diane Kalen-Sukra

Title

Chief Administrative Officer

Phone

250-357-9433

Email

cao@salmoc.ca

The Mayor/Chair is aware that I am submitting this application on behalf of my local government.

Yes

Project/Program Title:

Rebuilding the Public Record

Project Summary Paragraph

Please provide a summary of your project/program in 150 words or less.

Our small Village has struggled historically with qualified and stable staffing and was in operational crisis after the election of 2014 - no CAO, no financial statements for 2 years, new staff without municipal experience, and without a clean (unqualified audit) in years. No understanding that incoming mail was part of the public record and documents as vital as minutes, legal reports, studies were missing as there was no functioning central filing system. The auditors had been making recommendations for years that the organization did not have the capacity to follow up on. In a short year and a half, with a brand new Council/CAO/staff we have entirely rebuilt the public record, met all of the auditors recommendations, and are in compliance with best administrative and financial practices in the municipal sector.

Project Analysis

1. SERVICE DELIVERY

How has the implementation of this program/project improved services within your local government and your community at large?

With an entirely rebuild system to maintain the public record, every aspect of interaction and service with the public has been dramatically improved and the public trust renewed: new call log enables staff to track and follow up on all information and or action requests and redirect and categorize them by their type (daily review of the log ensures daily follow up and no call is left unaddressed); new

civic works request forms are tracked and action taken is recorded and followed up on promptly, primarily within the same day; creation of 15 new forms for service/process requests have streamlined processes and ensure administrative fairness. Also posted in fillable forms online to improve access: <http://salmo.ca/forms> and stored in new central filing system for easy follow up and action completion; all property files have been digitized and itemized so that requests can be emailed out and or printed immediately upon request; all incoming mail has been stamped, digitized and sent out to all Council and relevant staff in an email circular as they arrive for more immediate action and treatment; new central filing room has been rebuilt with the LGMA filing system applied (creation of 1500 new files) with labeling system, confidential files separated and put in locked cabinet.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How has the program/project served as a tool for both staff development and organizational improvement?

Rebuilding the central filing system involved the help of the LGMA (that lent the Village a copy of the 2012 Records Management Manual) and the assistance colleagues in the sector that advised of best practices and encouraged staff to preserve through the constant introduction of new processes and policies. Administrative staff, who with the exception of the CAO, were new to the municipal sector developed enormously from this rebuilding process as each system was introduced, the new central filing system index was created and records retrieved were filed in the system. Everything from setting disposition schedules to understanding what is personal information, implementing a new employee records policy and best practices in records management from "the ground up" was a priceless learning experience. The operations have now been successfully professionalized and this is apparent in the efficiency of our operations and service delivery.

3. ECONOMIC IMPACT

How has the program/project saved the community money and/or resources or encouraged economic development?

Our new rebuilt central filing system and proper handling, storing and accessing of the public record has saved enormous staff time and money. This has freed staff up to invest more time on other initiatives such as grant writing and in the past year and a half the Village has for the first time in it history secured 22 grants worth

more than what the Village collects in municipal taxes. This was also made possible by having our first "clean" financial audit - a prerequisite for qualifying for many grants. We have also, through the efficiency of our operations and handling of bylaw complaints have been able to reduce the hours of the bylaw officer by 60%, saving taxpayer dollars and resources. Contracts have also been signed with partnering community groups that didn't exist before building accountability into these arrangements and ensuring operations stay within budget. With this administrative efficiency, the civic works crew has responds quickly addressing all incoming concerns, and a new found pride in our work has inspired them to do more with less. Last year alone, all Village signs were renewed in-house, the maintenance of our parks has dramatically improved, the cemetery maintained and cleaned for the first time in years, street lines have been painted, 3 new streets have been repaved, and the drive through experience, reputation and appearance has so improved that we are already attracting investors - the latest from California opening shop as we speak: <http://heritagesalvage.com/>

4. TRANSPARENCY

How has this program/project improved upon accountability to the community's citizens?

We have worked hard to rebuild the public trust and the attached picture report summarizes our progress, the new accountability and transparency in our operations: <http://salmo.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Village-of-Salmo-Administrators-Report-October-13-2015.pdf> (Since we are in the process of a website upgrade to launch on July 1st, 2016 these links may not work when the committee reviews. If not, please type "Village of Salmo Administrators Report" in google to find it or contact us.)

Similarly, we have introduced an exhaustive 10-page Strategic Plan that is brought forward to Council every other meeting with updates checked off to mark ongoing progress: <http://salmo.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Approved-2015-2019-Strategic-Plan.pdf>

Staff reports also chart regular progress and help Council and citizens how we are utilizing tax dollars.

5. COLLABORATION

a. Tell us how colleagues/departments worked together to come up with innovative solutions.

There are only two "departments" - administration and civic works. We began by having monthly meetings of ALL staff to discuss operations, new political initiatives, community feedback, brainstorm ideas on how to improve relations, and train each other in Worksafe topics (a new staff member assigned each time to present a new OH&S topic). This built morale and understanding which has helped in service delivery because we have a good appreciation of each other's roles, contributions and unique talents. We also worked together to remodel the Village office with a professional lobby and service desk to improve service to the public.

b. Tell us how your Council/Board provided a supportive environment for implementing change.

The Council had a difficult mandate when they were elected. The municipalities finances and operations were in shambles and there was no staff training to carry out the work. The Council supported the hiring of qualified staff and worked hard to maintain the separation of politics and operations to "free staff up" to do their jobs and not get sidetracked by local politics. Council's visionary role in the Strategic Plan was also instrumental.

6. INNOVATION

What makes this program/project innovative and creative?

It is rare that a group of individuals has an opportunity to work so closely together to rebuild an organization. What is more common is coming into an organization and learning the established ways. In this project, we were rebuilding from the ground up and did this effectively with the support of Council and the incredible collaboration and cooperation of the staff. This has been empowering for the staff and unleashed everyone's creativity in finding solutions and inspiring the community. Our Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/VillageofSalmo>) shows the enthusiasm of the community with open houses and tours of school children who have submitted "ideas to make Salmo more awesome" to Council which are being incorporated in the Strategic Plan. Local highschool students regularly attend Council meetings and volunteered to successfully clean up the Village basement to make room for the new archive room.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

What measures have you put in place to ensure the continued operation of this initiative?(e.g. staff time, resources, financial)

We have doubled the office supplies budget and photocopy budget in our 5 year financial plan to be able to continue to afford the new quality materials, including proper archival paper for bylaw printing and storage, and the building of a properly enclosed and secured archive room in the basement and the continued upkeep of our records management built into the Strategic Plan. Staff now has the training, understanding and capacity to properly maintain the public record.

9. BEST PRACTICES

How do the processes behind the program/project, and the subsequent results, serve as an example of best practices?

In the rebuilding of the public record in Salmo, we adopted best practices in every aspect of records management - from the receipt of the record, to its appropriate distribution, storage and disposition. We relied heavily, of course on the LGMA Records Management manual and encourage all municipalities, including small ones, to invest the time necessary to "get your public record in order" because the time it saves and efficiencies it delivers in service delivery and public trust FAR outweigh any cost.

10. TRANSFERABILITY

How is this program/project transferable to other local governments?

All local governments MUST retain the public record in statutorily prescribed ways. Most records systems were established long ago and are on auto pilot with new staff not clearly trained in its operations and importance. The transfer to the electronic records system is a good opportunity for municipalities that have established systems to reconsider them and improve on them. this is also transferable to small municipalities with limited staff capacity and resources as encouragement and positive example.

11. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

What helpful advice would you share with other communities looking to embark on a similar project?

Don't fall into the trap that "filing is boring" or an overrated administrative task. It is in fact, central to good governance and efficient and effective service delivery and pays remarkable and lasting dividends to the organization and community.

12. TELL US MORE

Please share any other information you think may support your submission.

We wish we could add more pictures and slideshows, etc. to the application. Please don't hesitate to check our Strategic Plan, Administrators Report on the Strategic Plan (nice slideshow) and our Facebook page for data and graphics (including before and after shots) to mark our progress. Thank you for this opportunity to showcase our quiet, but important Rebuilding of the Public Record project.