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Final Report

Project Title: Administrative Management Manual

Abstract:

The purpose of this project was to develop an Administrative Management Manual for the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) for use by the upper level administrative staff in the central office and the regions throughout the state to: improve consistency and standardization of administrative programs and processes; share best practices; provide for business continuity and succession planning; and develop a set of metrics for management assessment.

This project has allowed me to improve my facilitation, conflict resolution and negotiation skills. I also strengthened my knowledge about the administrative and operational functions of the agency as well as gained more confidence in my leadership abilities.

Background:

To better appreciate the need for the manual, one should understand the organization of the public health system in South Carolina (SC). The SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is the public health and environmental protection agency for the state. SC is one of very few states that have both public health and environmental services combined into one agency. The principle assumption is that issues involving public health and the environment are intricately interwoven. Consequently, DHEC touches the life of every South Carolinian every day in some function from making sure that drinking water is clean, investigating disease outbreaks to assuring immunizations are provided to the population. Approximately 4,700 full-time employees and 600 additional hourly/temporary employees provide services through state, regional and county offices.

DHEC is under the supervision of the Board of Health and Environmental Control, which has seven members, one from each congressional district and one at large. The governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, appoints the members.

The DHEC system is a combination of centralized and decentralized administrative and operational control. The agency maintains a central office in Columbia, the state capital, and operates its programs, services and regulatory functions in all forty-six counties through eight public health and environmental quality control regions and three coastal management zones in approximately 130 locations throughout the state. (See the DHEC Regions Map in the Attachments.) The agency's external services fall under five general areas: Administrative Services, Health Services, Health Regulations, Environmental Quality Control, and Ocean and Coastal Resource Management. (See the DHEC Organizational Chart in the Attachments.) A brief overview of these primary operational areas follows:

Health Services primary functions include activities to prevent chronic and infectious diseases; promote healthy mothers, babies and families; improve and assure environmental health in areas such as restaurant sanitation, septic tanks and mosquito control; perform laboratory analyses for infectious diseases and newborn screening; encourage the reduction of health disparities; and support home health care needs.

Health Regulations oversees the development of the State Health Plan to address the need for medical facilities and services; evaluates, certifies, licenses and inspects health care facilities; regulates licenses and inspects sources of electronically produced radiation (X-rays); and oversees entities that provide emergency medical services throughout the state.

Environmental Quality Control enforces federal and state environmental laws and regulations; issues permits, licenses and certifications for activities that might affect the environment; responds to complaints on environmental activities; inspects permitted entities; responds to environmental emergencies to isolate and cleanup major contamination in protecting public health; and conducts education and outreach activities designed to involve the citizens in protecting the environment.

Ocean and Coastal Resource Management enforces the SC Coastal Zone Management Act to protect coastal resources and promote responsible development through permitting and certification programs by working closely with local governments and citizen groups in the eight coastal counties.

Administrative Services provides the internal administrative, business and support functions, oversight and central reporting to the agency and is organized under the Chief of Staff. This area includes the affirmative action, business management, contracts, drug control, financial management, information systems, personnel services, planning, public health preparedness, public health statistics and information systems, quality management and regional support functions.

As a growing percentage of experienced staff nears retirement, there are concerns about succession planning and replacement of experienced management and employees, as well as planning for business continuity, particularly during emergencies (e.g. pan flu, natural or man-made disasters). Although the agency has an extensive Administrative Policy Manual, my direct supervisor, the Chief of Staff for the agency, and upper level administrative managers in both the central office and the regions have identified this project as a critical need in Administrative Services to improve consistency and standardization of administrative programs or processes; share best practices; and provide for business continuity and succession planning.

Project Description:

The primary purpose of this project was to develop an Administrative Management Manual for the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control for use by the administrative staff in the central office and regions to: improve consistency and standardization of administrative programs and processes; share best practices; provide for business continuity and succession planning, and develop a set of metrics for management assessment.

The intent of the developing the manual is also to explain in more detail, the organization, responsibilities and processes of each of the Bureau/Office areas under agency central office Administration, which governs all DHEC deputy areas and offices. The administrative functions in each deputy area and region coordinate with agency Administration; i.e. personnel, contracts, procurement, information technology, etc. (See DHEC Organizational Chart and Regional Map in the Attachments.)

The project is **not** finished, but the anticipated completion is by spring 2008.

Draft #2 of the Administrative Management Manual, which is in notebook form, is currently being refined. To date each section of the notebook includes the following components (See Administrative Manual Format in Attachments.) as identified by both the central office and regional administrators at the Springmaid Retreat in February 2007:

- Bureau/Office
- Program areas
- Overview
- Processes
- Reports: who, what, when
- Examples, if appropriate
- Linkage to Administrative Policy Manual, Web or other resources
- Whom to call for assistance and contact information
- Best practices

These components are included for the administrative offices and bureaus listed below, which are part of central office Administrative Services:

- Affirmative Action/EEO Program
- Business Management
- Contracts
- Drug Control
- Financial Management
- Information Systems
- Personnel Services
- Planning
- Public Health Preparedness
- Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
- Quality Management
- Region & Program Support

The following program areas that directly impact Administration were also included in the manual:

- Internal Audits
- Media Relations
- Communication Resources
- Constituent Services and Legislation
- Competencies
- Strategic Planning

Objectives

Initial objectives as this project was conceptualized were:

1. Develop a process.
2. Develop a time line.
3. Develop a format.
4. Facilitate two group discussions - one with the central office bureau chiefs and the other with the regional administrators.
5. Meet individually with four regional administrators and four central office bureau chiefs to get one-on-one input on the project.
6. Develop a first draft of the guide.

7. Convene a third group representing both groups to discuss and make final recommendations on the content of the manual.
8. Develop the final draft and have the Chief of Staff approve the final project.
9. Present the project, process and outcomes to the DHEC Executive Management Team, which includes the Commissioner, General Counsel, the Chief of Staff, the Assistant to the Commissioner for External Affairs and the Deputy Commissioners of the four broad areas of the organization.
10. Print and distribute the manual and develop training on how to use the manual, if necessary.

Partners:

Partners include the Chief of Staff, central office directors and bureau chiefs, and regional office administrators and health directors.

Barriers:

Barriers anticipated were: 1) central office and regional staffs often have differing opinions and perspectives about what is needed and what works best in administration; 2) regional staff at times have the perception that they are subjected to needless administrative tasks by central office staff; and 3) the challenge to accomplish this project within the constraints of my other job responsibilities and the SEPHLI deadlines.

During the course of this project, barriers #1 and #2 have not proven to be problematic to this point. I have learned to value both the central office and regional office perspectives and have built trust among the participants. However, barrier #3 has been even more of an issue than I had anticipated because of increased job duties and the addition of a new project management area assigned to the Office of Planning, which is now under my supervision.

Results:

1. I developed a template for information with staff input to be inserted into the manual and met with central office administrative staff during regularly scheduled staff meetings to discuss the content and design of the manual.
2. Draft #1 of the manual was developed based on the above and presented to the administrators (both central and regional staff) at the Springmaid Retreat in February 2007. (Available upon request.)
3. I also facilitated a session with both central office and regional administrators at Springmaid. (See documents: RA Retreat Issues, Brainstorming Session Summary and Top Priorities in the Attachments.)

4. I met with my supervisor, the agency Chief of Staff, at least once a month at regularly scheduled staff meetings to discuss project progress and to get his feedback.
5. I met with three regional administrators in their respective regions to get additional thoughts, suggestions and concerns. This proved to be a valuable method of getting excellent information, but more important, of building trust. (See Summary of Site Visits with RA's in the Attachments.)
6. I met with several central office staff informally to get their input on the manual.
7. I have completed Draft 2 of the administrative manual, which will be featured at the SEPHLI December Retreat. (Available upon request.)
8. I facilitated another session with the regional administrative staff utilizing Draft #2. (See agenda dated October 24, 2007 in the Attachments.)
9. Draft #2 of the manual will be piloted with two newly appointed regional administrators to identify: the usefulness of the information including content, and format, gaps and other issues to improve the final product. I am very excited about this component which recently has received upper management support.
10. I have formed a small working committee of both central and regional administrators to provide final input on the manual and to develop a spreadsheet summary of important milestones – what when and to whom for inclusion in the manual.

Next Steps for Project Completion:

1. Develop Draft #3 based on #7 - #10 above.
2. Have the appropriate staff review the final draft of the manual including the Chief of Staff.
3. Finalize the manual.
4. Present the project, process and outcomes to the DHEC Executive Management Team.
5. Print and distribute the manual and develop training on how to use it, if necessary.
6. Develop a plan for revising the manual.

7. Place the final manual on the agency intranet.

Mentor:

Being able to work with my mentor helped me to conceptualize and plan the project in the early stages. She was also invaluable mid-course in reviewing my progress to date, making suggestions that I had not considered for project completion and in offering encouragement throughout the project development process. (See Notes from Meeting with Mentor in Attachments.)

Leadership Development Opportunities:

This project also has allowed me to improve my facilitation, conflict resolution and negotiation skills. I developed stronger working relationships with administration staff both at the central and regional levels. I have learned to better appreciate the different philosophies of each group as to what is needed, including the central vs. regional approach to business and administration. Equally important, I strengthened my knowledge about the operational and administrative functions of the agency, which was a personal goal, and I gained confidence in my leadership abilities.

Key lessons learned were to listen respectfully and with an open mind, try to put myself in the other person's shoes, understand personality differences and approaches to life and work, trust my own judgment, and not be afraid to use humor.

It has been a challenge for me to pull this project together to this point and meet the expectations of all partners. I remain excited about the professional development potential that this project has offered me and the fact that the manual has been identified as an agency need in the administrative area. I hope the manual will be a useful tool for managers and administrators in the years to come. So far, the feedback has been most positive.

Reviewers:

Anthony J. Lolas, PhD
Elizabeth Potter, JD