

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE – A COLLABORATION:

Notes from the LGBEN Workshop 9TH JULY, 2010

On the 9th July, ACELG facilitated a workshop at a Local Government Business Excellence Network forum with the aim of generating ideas and possibilities for building better support for the local government sector in implementing excellence frameworks.

The plenary of around 40 LGBEN members was divided into small groups, and each group was given the headings below and asked to consider process issues, potential challenges, project outputs and benefits for local government. After reporting back their ideas to the plenary, a voting process enabled each participant to rank the ideas according to the usefulness in their council.

The following notes summarise the thoughts and suggestions of each of the small groups, and are presented roughly by order of preference:

1. Online Library

The group could see the benefit in an online library of strategies, educational information, example tools and templates to implement the BEF and other continuous improvement programs, which would be accessible to all local government authorities but housed on a secure site.

The benefits of this would be real time access to best practice and benchmarking from anywhere, as it would be a dynamic resource which is organic in nature.

The host organisation would need to invest resources in building the platform and moderating the content, perhaps to be initiated through an environmental scan and survey for available material. Interactive features would be needed to ensure that councils update their information and keep it current.

2. Supporting Material for the BEF

The purpose of this project would be to provide clarity, support and direction to the local government sector in the awareness and implementation of the ABEF. The process might entail:

1. Researching the BEF process in local government;
2. Consultation within and outside the lg sector to identify good practice and common challenges;
3. Development of templates, guidelines and training programs; and
4. Identification of existing resources and mentors.

3. Case Studies

This proposal involved the preparation of detailed case studies of councils who have implemented the ABEF and other continuous improvement programs. The group were keen for a 'warts-and-all' approach allowing for the challenges to be shared as well as the successes, however this would necessitate a secure website and member log-in.

4. Networking Support

This proposal involved the development and maintenance of an on-line community who shared benchmarking data and information on best practice. The group could also act as a sounding board for ideas, and would contribute their own material for sharing and review – there were clear links between this initiative and the development of the on-line library.

5. Guidance on Copyright Issues

Councils were concerned that sharing of good practice and material based on the BEF might invite challenges for infringement of copyright. A solution which was discussed was that SAI Global could release a policy statement which explicitly allows councils to distribute material which contains reference to the BEF but which has been developed by them. They could also clarify any instances which would be considered a breach of copyright.

6. Executive Training and Coaching

Suitable training for senior management in local government could include one-on-one coaching, online support or peer networks. The training could cover:

- Definitions and descriptions of excellence
- Designing an implementation program for the ABEF
- Managing the cost of implementation
- Conducting evaluation and gaining feedback
- Managing CEO and senior staff turnover
- Achieving improvements in customer satisfaction

7. Demonstrating the Benefits, Defining Measures of Success

In order to measure the outcomes and benefits for councils to implement the ABEF, an appropriate suite of measures would need to be identified and linked to the five foundation blocks. The sector would need to be engaged in defining good practice, and then in setting standard areas for benchmarking. Online access could facilitate promotion, through stories, graphs and online video clips from different sized organisations. This would ensure that new members could access success data, and SAI Global may also be able to facilitate access to data from other sectors.

8. Local Government Awards

The purpose of these awards would be to create high profile events which celebrate good practice and give recognition to significant achievements. The aim would be a nationally recognized, graded scheme of recognition for local government which was aligned to the process utilized in other sectors. The process might entail:

- A review and assessment of current events;
- Industry sector review and suggesting improvements; and
- Potential 'build' of events process over time.

9. The Role of the Councillors

This project involved identifying the strength that Councillors can offer the ABEF process, and then working out how best to involve them in collaboration with staff, managers and the community. This process would aim to build a culture of trust and hold the Mayor accountable for performance and behaviours. Some suggestions included:

- Candidate training sessions prior to elections;
- Induction sessions to include awareness of ABEF and positive stories about councillor contributions;
- Generate a systems view which flowcharts the vision/mission process, their role in the bigger picture, and how behaviours and values align to this; and
- Annual self-assessment of councillor processes and behaviour.

10. Review of the ABEF

In reviewing the framework, the group were concerned that there be input from stakeholders and use of existing knowledge. This knowledge would include the material on the LGBEN website, good practice from LGBEN members and also from other sectors. The benefits of this reviewed framework would be a sharing of knowledge, exposure to wider networks outside local government, and greater consistency within local government.

About the ACELG Review of Excellence Frameworks

ACELG is currently working with the UTS Centre for Local Government to evaluate the tools which facilitate excellence in local government, and to consider further support and development of those tools. Consultation is currently underway with key industry contacts to explore opportunities for collaboration in identifying and addressing the needs of councils in driving excellence in local government. Further information about this project is available at the ACELG website at www.acelg.org.au or by contacting

Sarah Artist
Program Manager
UTS Centre for Local Government
sarah.artist@uts.edu.au
0409 830 283