



city of
Ankeny

bringing it all together

Engage to Develop Your Own Economics

City of Ankeny, Iowa

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Introduction

The City of Ankeny created an innovative approach for cities to deliver economic development services founded on three of the strengths of city government, (1) good planning, (2) relationship building, and (3) the ability to engage stakeholders in community issues.

The approach of the City of Ankeny changes the fundamental way in which economic development services are delivered in a community by establishing the city organization as the leader in economic development activities. The City of Ankeny adopted the new approach for promoting economic growth by (1) creating an economic development department reporting to the city manager, (2) preparing an action plan with relationship building as the foundation, and (3) applying engagement strategies with stakeholders to ensure sustainable success on major initiatives.

This narrative is focused on the third component of how engagement can play a pivotal role in economic development. The historical paradigm of a city merely providing financial incentive packages to new and expanding business is gone. The model has grown to include engagement of various stakeholders, whether it's a citizen, commercial broker, representative from your regional and state governmental agencies or a local business leader. Building partnerships and creating new relationships is the future approach to achieving goals in terms of economic development. Getting there requires the identification of those stakeholders and engaging them to provide a stronger knowledge base, as well as informed advocates for the city government and the community.

Changing the Service Delivery Model for Economic Development

Ankeny Iowa is a community with a population of over 42,000 and is located in central Iowa in the Des Moines metropolitan area. Ankeny's close proximity to Des Moines provides a convenient daily commute into the city for over 10,000 of its residents. The city has experienced five percent annual growth since the early 1990's creating new dynamics for economic development in the community, with an expected doubling of its population by 2030.

The City of Ankeny's role in economic development for several years was similar to many other communities in the country. Under this forty year-old model, they took a secondary role to the local private economic development corporation whose primary role included business attraction and acquisition of land to be sold to prospective businesses. The City's role was to provide financial incentives to businesses and extended infrastructure to the site

of the new business. The City also made an annual contribution the development corporation for delivering their marketing services to the community. Under this model, the City was a third party in economic development activities of the community.

The community dynamics changed over the years and citizens began to clamor for more job opportunities within the city instead of relying on surrounding communities to serve as job centers. In an effort to satisfy the community's demands the Ankeny city council decided to be much more assertive in their role and efforts to positively shape Ankeny's future. The City identified a gap in economic development services capacity. To fill this need the city council accelerated its investment to become the community leader in economic development by hiring staff and creating a department to serve as the city's clearinghouse for anything related to business and industry in Ankeny.

The new department was given the freedom to use the unique assets of the City organization to build a long term plan to promote economic growth in the community. They focused on applying some of the techniques they used in other departments to the work of economic development, planning and relationship building. The cost of the department is primarily driven by support for staff. The department consists of a director, assistant director and administrative assistant. For the current fiscal year the department is budgeted to have approximately \$400,000 in expenditures.

The first step for the new department was to prepare an economic development action plan based on building relationships with stakeholders and engaging them in department and community initiatives. The City Council adopted the **Economic Development Action Plan** in 2006. The plan has key strategies built around the concept of engagement and relationship building.

Engagement & Relationship Building

The first critical component of the action plan is the innovative use of engagement strategies to make each of the actions more successful. Elected officials and staff put a premium on stakeholder input as they apply several principles to drive collaborative behavior in their engagement efforts. They are:

- Tap into the insights and expertise of others who may know more about something than you do
- Leverage the assets of other organizations to stretch your own assets
- A better product results if you involve others in the making the solution
- The issue is best framed with the input from people closest to the issue
- Work toward meeting the needs of all stakeholders to find the best solution
- Engagement of others is appreciated and builds ownership in the solution

The creation of a full-service economic development department and the application of the relation-based principles in the implementation of the action plan are in themselves rather unique. But even more so are the ways in which department staff used traditional engagement techniques such as focus groups, planning retreats, consensus building exercises, negotiations, problem solving exercises, and brainstorming sessions to make new economic development initiatives successful.

Execution and Outcomes

Using the above framework staff applied the engagement strategies by (1) creating a task force of local business leaders who are Ankeny residents to advise the department on economic development initiatives, (2) convening five citizen focus groups to give advice on economic development strategies for the city's targeted industries, (3) partnering with eight property owners to develop a joint business park, (4) facilitating a workforce partnership between the local schools and businesses, (5) participating in a joint venture to develop a 1,000-acre new urbanist neighborhood in the community, (6) collaborating with five neighboring cities, Polk County and two development corporations to develop priorities for the northeast portion of Polk County, (7) working with several small businesses to improve telecommunication services in their neighborhood, and (8) partnering with a business and the federal government to remediate a former landfill/waste water treatment complex that had been dormant for thirty years.

The use of these principles has enabled the City through its Economic Development Department and the implementation of its Action Plan to build unique partnerships with the private sector, solve problems that have existed for decades, and position the community for greater economic development success.

City governments are in a unique position to have the ability and authority to engage other entities and citizens in partnerships that have the overall goal of making a better community. Although the department's name is Economic Development the staff and their engagement strategies tend to put them in role of intergovernmental relations for the city. Whether it is providing a presentation on what the city is working on to congressional delegations or making contact with representatives from the state department of transportation to resolve a road access issue for one of Ankeny's business parks. Again, it all comes back to engaging the right stakeholders and nurturing the right relationships.

The investment in staff and resources by the Ankeny city council has reaped benefits in terms of job and tax base growth through expansions of existing businesses (Monsanto, Accumold, Clarke American) to recruitment of new business to the community (Pioneer and Embria). The newly established engagement efforts implemented by the City's economic development staff may not be the only reason for these business successes, but they are crucial for their continued growth and prosperity of these employers in Ankeny.

Innovation/Creativity

1. How did the program improve the organization?

The creation of the Economic Development Department and the implementation of the Action Plan streamlined the community's economic development efforts, utilized the full power of the City toward economic development and leveraged the resources of its partners to make Ankeny more competitive.

The application of engagement strategies by the Economic Development Department resulted in the use of unique approaches to eight initiatives and eight successful outcomes. The management and staff of the organization can use these successes as examples for encouraging collaborative efforts in their departments. The foundation for increasing the problem solving capacity of the city organization is set through the success of these initiatives.

2. Were new technologies used?

No.

Citizen Outcomes

1. What community needs were identified and fulfilled?

The changing economic development environment and the growth of Ankeny made it necessary to have a more effective approach for economic development services. The creation of the City's Economic Development Department, preparation of the Economic Development Action Plan and the use of a variety of engagement strategies improved the community by engaging citizens in the realm of economic development and finding effective solutions to pressing community issues. Their participation resulted in the creation of better economic development strategies and policies than would have occurred if they were limited to staff input.

2. Did the initiative improve access to your government?

Yes. By engaging citizens and businesses the staff was able to identify their needs and wants. In many occasions as the staff meet with existing business they served as the liaison with other city departments to remedy an issue the business was experiencing, whether it was a city infrastructure issue, streamlining building expansion permits or providing direct communication links to other parts of the city organization.

3. Has the health of the community improved as a result?

Not applicable

Applicable Results and Real World Practicality

1. What practical applications can be shared?

The engagement techniques used in each of the initiatives, especially the Workforce Partnership can be shared. The Economic Development Action Plan document can also be shared with other cities who want to take on a larger role in the development of their community.

2. How applicable is the program to other local governments?

Cities have a vested interest in economic development and may benefit by assuming the lead role in the community's economic development efforts. The approach used by the City of Ankeny to create an economic development department and use an action plan is applicable to many cities. The strategies to engage citizens in community leadership roles and to solve community issues are applicable to all cities.

3. What results can you share?

- The Ankeny community has benefited from the creation of jobs, providing an opportunity for residents who want to live and work in Ankeny to do so, as well as expanding the Des Moines metropolitan areas overall jobs market.
- The 2008 citizen satisfaction survey revealed that 95 percent of survey respondents believe the overall quality of life in Ankeny is good or excellent.
- The survey also confirmed respondents' continued trust in local government, that they receive good value for the taxes they pay and believe city government listens to citizens; up five percentage points from 2006.
- The City's Economic Development Department now serves as a trustworthy, reliable business resource, strengthening bonds between city government and the business community.

4. Performance measures

Although specific performance measures related to economic development are difficult to measure, the city has increased its non-retail commercial tax base and job opportunities for the community. Additionally, the efforts of the department continue to work towards one of the Ankeny city council's five long-term community goals: Develop a Regional Business Center. The economic development staff continues to work with multiple property owners to develop the Crosswinds Business Park concept. This business park is expected to serve as the community's future regional business and job center.

Case Study Presentation

Develop and present a step by step lesson plan of engagement strategies using one of the models listed previously and take the participants through a series of exercises that

highlight key learnings, how to identify unique opportunities and how to implement engagement strategies at home.

Expected outcome of the session: Participants would have a better understanding of:

1. The changing role of government in economic development
2. How to engage community stakeholders
3. How improved engagement leads to community support for local government.

Innovation in Action – Workforce Partnership

Typical of the initiatives that use innovative engagement strategies is the City staff facilitated Workforce Partnership. Department staff has strong relationships with the business community, the local school district and the community college. During their annual business visits, the need was expressed for qualified workers from the next generation. In meetings with school officials, the need was expressed for students in secondary grades who do not want to pursue a four-year degree to have strong career paths.

Department staff facilitated a planning session in March of 2007 with twenty-five people from local businesses and education institutions. The engagement of the key stakeholders resulted in a consensus that the community needed a comprehensive program to connect students with quality career opportunities in the community. They focused on four specific aspects of the program, including (1) providing teacher an experience in local businesses, (2) introducing students to the contemporary workplace of Ankeny businesses, (3) presenting career opportunities for students to their parents, and (4) getting business persons into the classroom.

Intent of the Program

The intent of the Workforce Partnership is (1) to give high school students a greater understanding of their career opportunities and the skills they will need and (2) to give local businesses a more qualified potential workforce.

Anticipated Outcomes:

The anticipated outcomes of the Workforce Partnership are that:

1. Young people find a rewarding career that helps them reach their potential
2. Young people develop the soft skills they will use at work, at home and in other parts of their lives
3. Young people learn directly from business professionals in the classroom and make the connection between education and career success
4. Teachers become familiar with the contemporary workplace and adapt their teaching approach to match the skill requirements
5. Teachers build the skills sets of students they will use throughout their working years

6. Parents understand the career opportunities and help their teenage children pursue an education/career path
7. Business leaders get into the classroom and influence how students are prepared for the workplace
8. Local businesses prosper with talented employees
9. Ankeny will have a strong business base

The Summer Teacher Internship Program, the first phase of the comprehensive program, was designed to give teachers direct exposure to career opportunities in today's workplace and translate it into classroom teaching. The internship program was developed by a committee with representatives from businesses, education and the City of Ankeny over a twelve month period. The strong relationships between the participants enabled the group to determine the needs of all sides and develop a program that met everyone's needs.

Over three weeks in the summer of 2009, five local high school teachers spent three days at Snyder and Associates, eight days at John Deere Des Moines Works, and two days at Siemens Building Technologies. They observed the nature of the jobs performed at each business and understand the skills needed to be successful.

The internship program gave them the opportunity to experience today's workplace environment and develop a greater understanding of the skill sets students will need in the future. The businesses engaged the teachers in the day-to-day activities of the business place and the job sites. Their experience included participation in an active continuous process improvement exercise, direct exposure to job sites to learn the skill sets needed for making sound decisions, receiving overviews of career pathways for students, and discussions with employees who have used continuing education to capitalize on career opportunities. It also enabled them to give students better career guidance to match their skills with opportunities in the workplace.

The results of the teachers' experience will have an impact on the teaching methods of the teachers and the future curriculum of the school system. While it was anticipated that the internship would show the need for student to have strong technical skills to be successful in the workplace, the actual result was the strong understanding that students/employees' soft skills are a strong determinant of their success in the business environment. The most important soft skills are: critical thinking, teamwork, communications, listening, ability to learn, tact, writing, verbal skills and taking criticism.

Program Costs:

Program Expenses:

Summer Teacher Internships \$12,000
(\$2,400 stipend for five teachers)

Program Revenues:

John Deere	\$ 3,000
Siemens Building Technologies	\$ 1,000
Snyder and Associates	\$ 1,000
MidAmerican Energy	\$ 3,000
City of Ankeny	\$ 3,000
Ankeny Economic Development Corporation	<u>\$ 1,000</u>
Total	\$12,000

Results of the first phase of the program - Workforce Partnership:

1. Teachers learned that the level of a student's soft skills are a primary determinant of their success in the workplace (this finding was surprising since the committee's expectation was that technical skills were the most important to workplace success)
2. Teachers prepare action plans for adopting teaching methods that develop the soft skills of students
3. The school district develops an initiative to incorporate soft skills training in the curriculum
4. The engagement of the business community and the schools resulted in a valuable exchange of expertise and insights that benefitted both groups
5. The common interests of business and education formed the basis for long term relationships
6. The teachers are re-energized about their work

Summary of Successful Initiatives Driven by the Use of Engagement Strategies

The City has used these principles in eight different initiatives with citizens and other organizations. Each of the initiatives involved different challenges, different stakeholders, and different engagement techniques.

Economic Development Task Force

A task force comprised of local business and education leaders who meet five times per year to give their perspectives on economic development issues and potential strategies for bringing more businesses to Ankeny. Policy proposals are presented to the City Council for action.

Business Focus Groups

Five focus groups of citizens with expertise in specific areas have met since 2008 to provide their input on economic development strategies for the community including marketing, technology, bioscience, freight movement and business decision factors. The results of the focus group input are used as action steps for the department.

Metro North Neighborhood Telecommunications

A partnership with local businesses in two adjacent business parks and Qwest Communications to upgrade the telecommunication services in their neighborhood. The city facilitated the conversations with the businesses to understand their needs and Qwest Communications to find a solution. The result is the city subsidizing the installation of equipment that increases the telecommunication options in the business parks.

Crosswinds Business Park

Economic Development Department staff brought together eight property owners with land of less than one acre to over 250 acres through a process to create a business park at the intersection of Interstates 80 and 35. They partnered with the property owners in monthly meetings over a three year period to master plan the 400-acre business park and get City Council approval of a Planned Unit Development.

Prairie Trail Development

The Economic Development Department led the City's role in the master planning of over 1,000 acres into a new urbanist neighborhood. The City partnered with a local resident to plan and develop the area with over 250 acres of community parks, trails and open spaces. Key components of the planning efforts included the development of a Community Vision for Prairie Trail from citizen focus groups and City Council-adopted Environmental Stewardship Principles to guide storm water runoff management and environmental remediation.

Landfill/Waste Water Treatment Complex

The Economic Development Department worked with other city departments to engage John Deere and the Army Corps of Engineers in the development of a plan to remediate a former landfill/waste water treatment complex in the center of the community. The parties, collaborating with the Environmental Protection Agency, designed and funded a \$9 million project to remediate the site in preparation for the development of a regional community park.

North/East Polk County Coalition

The Economic Development Department is a leader in the formation and continued activity of the North/East Polk County Coalition, a group of six cities, Polk County and three development organizations. The coalition adopted seven priorities on issues where they

have a common interest. They lobby annually on the federal level for their priorities and work together to implement them.

Workforce Partnership

A collaborative between three local businesses, the local high school and the community college (1) to give high school students a greater understanding of their career opportunities and the skills they will need and (2) to give local businesses a more qualified potential workforce.