



Douglas County Government: Eating the Elephant One Bite at a Time

Douglas County took a very deliberate approach to educating and engaging employees throughout the development and implementation of their balanced scorecard system. This calculated approach was one of the most critical methods for dealing effectively with the enormous change that would filter through their organization – as well as for distributing the workload for this large, but critical, project. Douglas County did not have a lot of resources (money or staff) to dedicate to this project, but by “eating the elephant one bite at a time,” they have been able to quickly and fully implement 12 cascaded departmental scorecards and are using them to make data-driven decisions. And through the process, they not only developed 150 knowledgeable internal balanced scorecard champions, but are achieving breakthrough results because of the incredible commitment of employees who are all now pulling in the same direction.

The journey began in 2009 when the Board of County Commissioners in Douglas County, Colorado decided to use the Balanced Scorecard Institute’s Nine Steps to Success™ methodology as the strategic framework to translate the high level goals and results that they had developed under the Policy Governance model into operational terms and activities.

But rather than bring in a team of consultants to lead the project to convert broad policy into actionable strategy, the County elected to have Jerry Stigall, the County’s Director of Organization Development, Strategy, & Policy, attend the Balanced Scorecard Institute’s two-week BSMP Master Certification program, which is offered in association with George Washington University.



“We chose the “eat the elephant a bite at a time” implementation strategy in which we involved 150 BSC Champions to share the heavy-lifting.

-- Jerry Stigall, Director of
Organization Development,
Strategy, & Policy





Douglas County now has actionable data on 12 fully-developed and aligned departmental scorecards - a significant accomplishment in short order.



Citizen satisfaction levels for Douglas County are now as high as or higher than any county government in the U.S.

“What I discovered through balanced scorecard training,” said Stigall, “was that with so many different divisions in the county working toward broad goals, we needed the balanced scorecard to bring all of these efforts together to measurably achieve the four goals [that Douglas County had established].”

With support from County Manager, Doug DeBord, Stigall used his new knowledge to plan and execute the balanced scorecard implementation for Douglas County.

“This is important for the organization because...the balanced scorecard is a recognized way for us as an organization to achieve the operational excellence that we desire,” said DeBord, “and this is the model and approach that we’re going to use to strategically implement and align our organization resources to further those goals and further them in a measurable way.”

Educating everyone about the “what, why and how” of balanced scorecard was extremely important to Douglas County. Workshops were held with 12 departments and were designed to take the ‘mystery’ out of the balanced scorecard by demonstrating what the balanced scorecard is and how it is used to operationalize high level goals and strategies in order to make them ‘actionable’ throughout the organization. This methodical approach to education was a key driver in generating the support and commitment needed throughout the organization to ensure a successful implementation and the development of 12 scorecards, one for each department under the Board of County Commissioners.

Additionally, Douglas County used the Balanced Scorecard Institute’s e-learning overview course as an introduction to the balanced scorecard for senior leadership, followed by a more structured classroom experience. The key lesson Douglas County learned: spend the time up front to ensure the audience has a good understanding of the balanced scorecard methodology and most importantly, that everyone uses terminology in the same way.

The acid test to the effectiveness of this approach was seen very early on during the first cascade sessions, when the staff who were involved in Tier 1 began facilitating the individuals who had just been introduced to the balanced scorecard through the departmental cascading sessions. “Balanced scorecard is a tremendous tool for strategic planning both in communication and mapping out your strategies. I think it’s a valuable tool for any organization, public or private sector” commented Steve Dwyer, Deputy Chief Building Official.

The model that Douglas County designed to get people on board and to share in the work of developing and implementing the strategic balanced scorecard has worked quite well. “We’re able to really focus on what we need to do and how we need to get there and it brings us together as a department,” stated Jonna Negus-Pemberton, Fairgrounds Manager.

“We continue to witness our balanced scorecard expertise increasing and feel this model is our best assurance of sustaining an incredible effort that we started some eight months ago,” said Stigall. “For the first time in our history, Douglas County is making tremendous strides in truly aligning our organization strategically, from the top floor to the first floor. We continue each day to review and refine our work in order to ensure we are focused on the right things and that we are measuring not what’s interesting, but what’s important. The discussions that now take place are about our strategy first, not our tasks or projects. Citizen and stakeholder response has been superb and we have seen customer experience and satisfaction with our services rise to an all-time high.”

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About Douglas County, Colorado

Douglas County is Colorado’s 8th most populous county, it includes the cities of Castle Pines North, Castle Rock, Larkspur, Lone Tree, and Parker.

The County’s vision, “Striving for Excellence in Local Governance and Public Service,” is continually top of mind for County leadership. And while service delivery is one primary role for Douglas County government, it is only one aspect of a total problem-solving approach to governance that requires citizen engagement for total effectiveness. The County’s strength, as the centerpiece of the Denver/Colorado Springs development corridor, is a perfect blend of quality lifestyle and business environment.

