A Fresh Start for Fulton County:

New Manager Leads Government Transformation to Performance-Oriented Principles
In 2015, Fulton County's leaders collaborated with Accenture to identify six high-level goals and develop a comprehensive strategic plan to meet those goals. They are now working to align the County's operations and budget to support the strategic plan. To focus resources on the right results, they've adopted outcome-oriented budgeting and are transforming from a control orientation to a performance orientation.

Executive Summary

Sometimes it takes an outside perspective and a strong will to drive government transformation. In Fulton County, Georgia, a new County Manager is bringing both—with a goal of evolving the County into an organization driven by performance and outcomes.

To help in realizing that vision, the County has engaged Accenture through a transformation partnership. In a matter of months, the County made significant headway. They developed a strategic plan articulating initiatives for the six goal areas, along with a performance management framework for measuring progress against these goals. They redesigned the County's budgeting process to strengthen alignment between top-line strategic priorities and budgetary investment in outcomes. And, leaders have embraced a change management framework for supporting a fundamental organizational restructuring and cultural shift.

These initiatives represent the beginning of what will be an ongoing story—offering information and inspiration to other local government leaders seeking a more innovative and effective approach.

Client Profile

One of the most populous counties in the Southeast, Fulton County, Georgia employs about 5,000 and has an annual budget of approximately $1 billion. In March 2015, the County welcomed experienced business executive, Dick Anderson, as County Manager, along with several new elected members of its seven-member Board of Commissioners.

Opportunity

In April 2015, Accenture facilitated a strategic retreat, where Anderson and his team identified six strategic priorities. Their vision: that Fulton County will be a place where all people are healthy; all people are safe; all people are self-sufficient; all people have economic opportunities; all people's lives are culturally and recreationally enriched; and all people trust government is efficient, effective and fiscally sound. Recognizing that the vision wouldn't be realized through fragmented efforts, Fulton County issued a competitive procurement for a transformation partner to help guide this government transformation journey and ultimately selected Accenture.
Solution

To launch the partnership, Fulton County and Accenture collaborated on a series of projects, including fleshing out the strategic plan, building a foundation for performance and change management, and designing an outcome-focused budgeting process.

Using its 2016–2019 strategic plan as a foundation, the County is re-examining every aspect of its operations—from how it manages people to how it allocates funds. Rather than approaching these as individual initiatives, leaders are tackling them as part of an integrated whole, achieving alignment across the County’s strategy, operations and budget.

Results

These successes represent only the beginning of what Fulton County will achieve through this innovative approach. Anderson and his team have laid a strong foundation for reshaping how the County sets priorities, measures performance, allocates resources, organizes operations and serves citizens. To date, they’ve made significant progress, including:

- Publishing a four-year Countywide strategic plan to guide priorities for service delivery and resource allocation
- Establishing quarterly performance reports to provide the public and elected Board with updates on progress against the strategic plan
- Redesigning the budget process to shift from paying for costs to investing in outcomes
- Conducting an administrative policy review to “clear the decks” for implementing the strategy
- Implementing a new customer service paradigm for all public-facing employees
- Establishing a series of leadership development workshops for senior staff
- Expanding use of performance-based contracting with service providers

Most importantly, Fulton County has begun the important shift from a focus on control (“do things right”) to a focus on performance (“do the right things”)—and is embracing the importance of putting citizens first.

"Achieving big improvements requires a bold approach. To achieve our six strategic priorities, Fulton County couldn’t simply do the same things faster or less expensively. We are rethinking the fabric of our organization—including our people, processes and technology—to deliver more value and better outcomes for the citizens we serve."

—Dick Anderson, County Manager, Fulton County
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