

Employee Engagement Initiatives at Blue Earth County



Encouraging Staff Retention and Development Opportunities
MACA Conference Presentation
September 11, 2015

Recent Employee Engagement & Development Initiatives at Blue Earth County

- County Ambassador Program (January 2014)
- New Employee Onboarding (April 2015)
- Enhanced Organizational Communication Efforts (April 2015)



County Ambassador Program (CAP)



Timeline for Initiating the Program

- Spring 2013
 - Presentation and discussion about potential employee engagement/training program to Labor Management Committee
 - Establishment of the CAP Committee
- Summer 2013
 - Program development
 - Leadership presentations
- Fall 2013
 - Additional presentations to leadership
 - Promotion of the program to employees
- Winter 2013
 - Deadline for applications
 - Participant selection
 - Session planning



Program Development

- County Ambassador Program Committee Role
 - Establish goals/outcomes for an employee program
 - Build program structure
 - Discuss and decide program details
 - Help create “buy in” from LMC and County leadership
 - Determine how to promote the program and “sell” it to Department Heads and staff

Program Background & Objectives

- The County Ambassador (CAP) Program is an employee learning and development program open to all staff regardless of role or tenure with the following objectives for participants to:

CONNECT.

Build relationships with employees across other departments.

DEVELOP.

Gain knowledge about the broader mission of the organization outside specific department responsibilities.

LEARN.

Understand how County services impact our community.



Program Structure

- Third Wednesday of each month
- January to July (seven sessions)
- 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. (with lunch)
- Held at varying County facilities
- Each building and each department part of the schedule
- Participant binders provided
- Biography sheets for participants and presenters
- Department handouts each session
- Use of different presentation styles
- Tours and staff introductions
- Session starters and relationship-building activities
- Department handouts and resources provided



Launching the Program

- Created a brochure/program application
- Provided information for leadership to share with staff
- Distributed organizational e-mails
- Prepared informational presentations for staff meetings
- Promoted the program through Labor Management Committee
- Selection process handled by Human Resources
- Program facilitated by Communications Manager

Program Curriculum

- Department-based content
 - Some presentations similar to sessions offered to residents through our Citizens Academy
 - Presentations feature internal and organizational-specific information in layman's terms where possible
- Varying presentation lengths and styles for departments
- Each session includes a session starter, re-cap time and lunch

Program Schedule Example

- January - Administration/Library
- February – Public Works
- March - Human Services
- April – Taxpayer Services/Finance/Physical Plant
- May – Environmental Services/IT/Veteran Services
- June – Sheriff/County Attorney/Community Corrections
- July – County Board/Administrator/Landfill/Rapidan Park





Cohort 1: 2014





Cohort 2: 2015



Why Did we Invest in the CAP Program?

- Citizens Academy Program Successes
- Labor Management Committee (LMC) Discussions
 - Help employees feel more connected to the County's overall mission (i.e. beyond their departments mission)
 - Enhance employee morale
 - Help eliminate silos across departments
 - Provide more internal training opportunities (organizational knowledge)
 - Promote relationship-building across departments

Program Details

- 18 participants in 2014
- 17 participants in 2015
- Cross-county participation of employees
- Variety of tenure among employees participating
- 28 hours of training per participant over seven months (networking lunch time not included)
- All departments part of the session agendas
- County departments present anywhere from 20 minutes to 4 hours annually







Program Budget

- Participant binders
- In-house copies for sessions
- Graduation certificates
- Bus rental for Ponderosa Landfill & Graduation Picnic
- Seven lunches for participants and speakers

Estimated total annual cost:

\$1,600

***Does not include staff time. All participant and presenter time is spent in-house as part of a normal County work day. This is the real cost of the program.**



Program Measurements & Feedback

- ROI was a major concern during program development
- Session surveys
- Overall program survey
- Verbal discussion with County Administrator :
 - What did the employees learn or take away from program?
 - How will participants be ambassadors?
- “Buzz throughout departments”
- Appreciation
- Pride
- Informal comments/e-mails

Participant Perspective

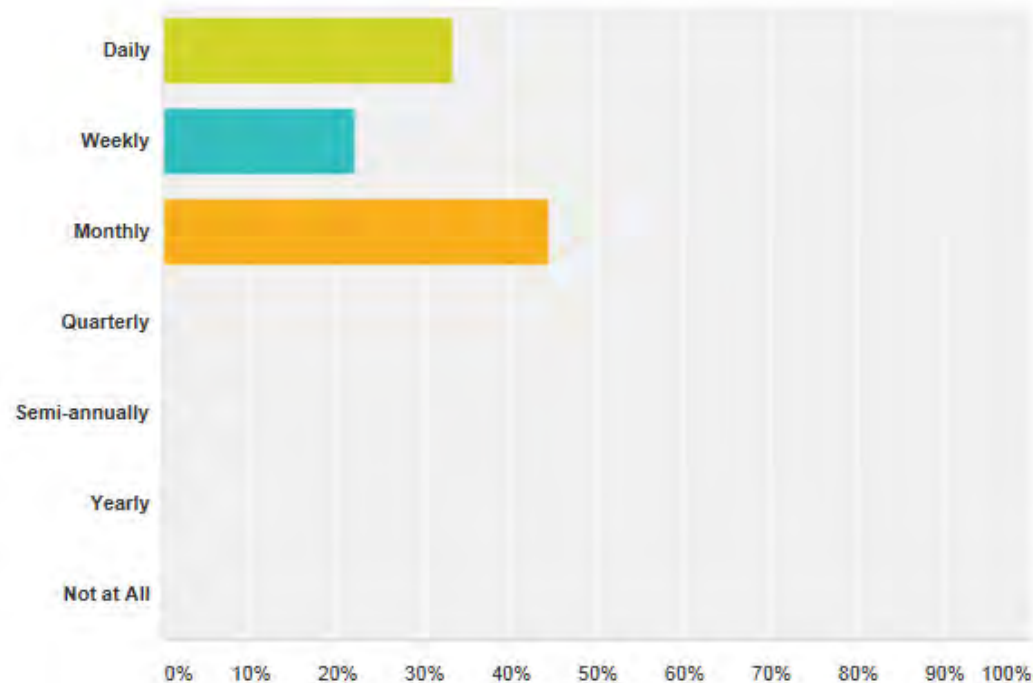


2015 Overall Participant Survey Findings

	Yes	No	Neutral/Same	N/A
Do you feel more connected to the organization and its mission?	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
That you have a greater knowledge of County programs and services?	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
You have a better understanding of the County budget and allocation of resources?	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
You had the opportunity to interact with Staff, Department Heads and Commissioners?	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
You feel greater pride for the work you and other employees do on behalf of Blue Earth County Taxpayers?	88.89%	0.00%	11.11%	0.00%
You feel more valued as a Blue Earth County Employee?	66.67%	11.11%	22.22%	0.00%

2015 Survey Findings

**How often will you use the information
learned through CAP as part of your work
at Blue Earth County?**



How Are Participants Using the Information?

Responses

Connect with people if needed to do a better job!

I am using information every day to help inform my work as well as using connections made. I am able to better explain what local government does and how valuable it is as well as address some of the negative stigma around how tax dollars are used.

I have a better understanding of what other departments do and I love sharing that with other people.

I will use the relationships I developed through CAP to fill gaps between Departments and services in attempts to make service delivery more seamless for the customer and more efficient for the County.

I will be able to better answer concerns and inquiries into County services.

Through my public service of getting customers to the right place to ask questions.

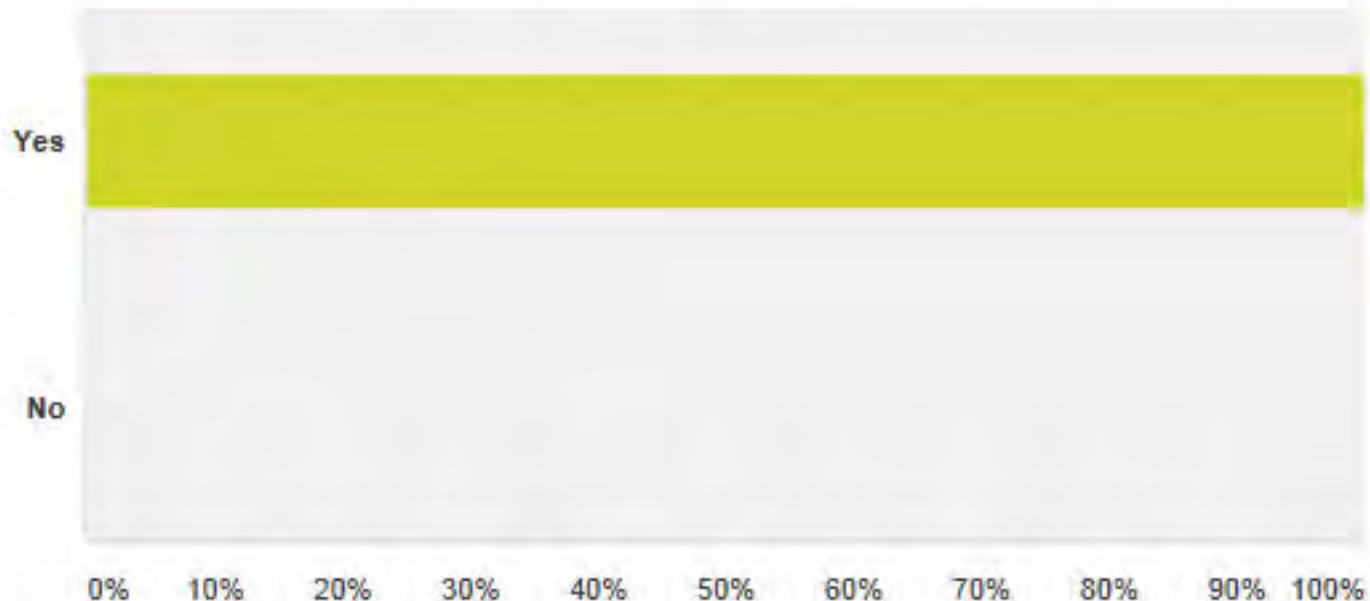
I will be better equipped to answer questions that I get from taxpayers regarding the services that BEC provides, for example the recycle fee on property tax statements. I will try to make people aware of the services we provide, at work and in my personal life.

I will be able to answer questions and direct the public to the correct areas with in the county to find the services they need.

I will share what I have learned to co-workers, relatives and friends, and BEC residents. I will use what I have learned to better assist the residents so that they can access to all of the services we have in our County.

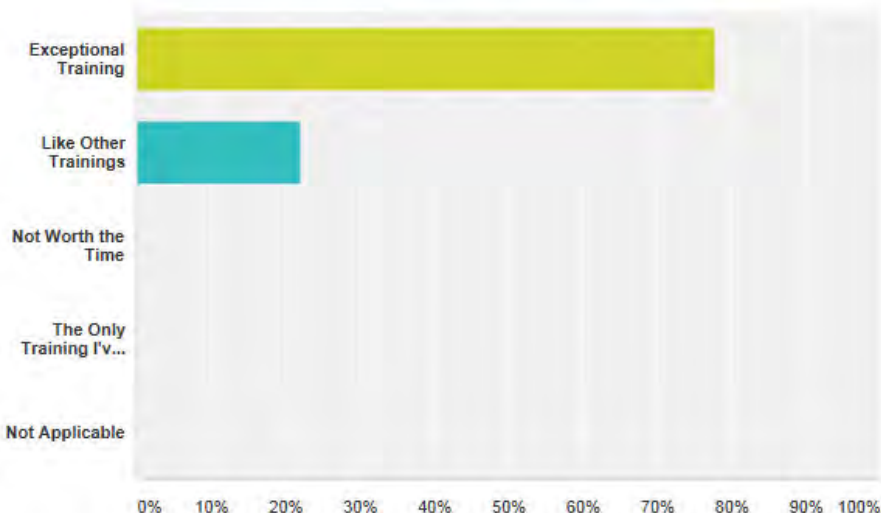
2015 Survey Findings

Were you able to build relationships/contacts with staff in other departments based on your participation in the CAP program?



2015 Survey Findings

In comparison with other trainings as part of your work at Blue Earth County, how does the CAP Program rate? Please explain your answer in the comment box.



I liked this training because it was specific to Blue Earth County and all of the information we received about each department.

I feel there is a great deal of value in all of the trainings that I have attended through work at BEC, and CAP is no exception. I learned a great deal and had fun doing it.

It was nice to hear from the different department heads and supervisors and staff to learn what each area does.

The bigger picture that is beyond our work trainings.

2014 Feedback: What Did Participants Take Away from the Program

Blue Earth County has great employees—technically skilled, engaged & great attitudes. These employees do good and important work and take pride in serving the community.

I enjoyed learning the different functions of each department and how each department contributes to the county as a whole. I also was very impressed with how much knowledge the presenters had.

I learned about many departments, and jobs in Blue Earth County. I really value the connections I made with other employees that work in different departments. It makes it much easier to call and ask for information, or for help for myself, or for a citizen regarding County services. I also feel more connected to the County as a whole and the different services being provided.

I saw and heard about parts of the County that I was unfamiliar with. I learned about all of the services that are provided.

I learned more than I thought I would. I was blown away at what I didn't know about the county. Everything that it takes to make daily things work.



2014 Participant Experiences

The program was invigorating--it really instilled a sense of pride to be a County employee and to be a part of an organization that is responsible for providing so many important services and products to the community.

This program has helped me gain a greater understanding of the county functions and processes. I feel I can make a greater contribution to this organization with the knowledge that I have gained.

I greatly enjoyed this program. I really didn't know what to expect when I signed up! However, I left having learned many different things about the county and the various services that are offered that I did not know about before going through CAP.

I believe that this program made me feel more connected to the program than I have felt throughout my years as an employee. Thank you for putting this together!!

I will be letting all of my co workers about this and telling them to sign up for the next round.

Employee Engagement Initiatives at Blue Earth County



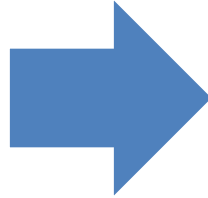
Employee Onboarding

Scope of Kaizen Event

HR New Employee Orientation Process

First Step

New employee is issued final offer letter



Last Step

New employee has received all initial training / orientation (at the organizational level) required for them to be successful in their position

Out of Scope

- Specific departmental/positional training

Business Issues

- ▣ **The prior process did not provide:**
 - Overview to the County as a whole (including values and cultures)
 - Insight as to how the employee's position fits into the bigger picture
 - Knowledge about finance, communication/media, IT, help desk, and other internal departments that may support them in their positions
 - Ensure new employees receive all needed information because each department handles it differently
- ▣ **Nothing welcomed or engaged the employee on their first day at a new job working for Blue Earth County**
- ▣ **Everything was done in paper**



New Employee Onboarding

Human Resources completed a Kaizen event with the following objectives:

- Further develop employee engagement by understanding the services provided by Blue Earth County and their role as part of the entire organization
- Re-engineer an onboarding process that leaves a new employee impressed and excited to be a part of Blue Earth County
- Enhance, standardize and streamline the onboarding process for new employees



New Employee Onboarding

Objectives (cont'd)

- Provide a step-by-step program to teach new employees their roles, what the cultures and norms of the organization are and how they are expected to behave in the workplace
- Utilize technology in areas that can streamline the process for new employees, departments and HR
- Ensure consistent information is communicated to new employees on areas that apply to all employees

Onboarding Components

- **County Checklist:** This checklist contains required tasks to complete before a new employee's first day and items to cover on their first day, first week, and first month. The County Checklist is used by all supervisors county wide.
- **IT Checklist:** This checklist contains information the IT Department needs to know prior to an employee's first day. The IT Checklist is submitted via the County's Track-IT system.
- **New Employee Schedule Template:** This schedule is a template for supervisors to edit and create a personalized schedule for new employees during their first week at Blue Earth County. The items already on the schedule are required, but each supervisor can rearrange the schedule and add items pertaining to their department.



Onboarding Components

- **Mentor Checklist:** Each new employee is assigned a mentor in their department. The checklist explains the mentor role and lists tasks the mentor should complete with the new employee.
- **Group Orientation:** Scheduled every 2 months for newly hired employees to learn about the County history, mission, vision, departments, safety policies and procedures.
- **New Employee Feedback Survey:** Every new employee will be asked to complete a survey after they have been employed for 3 months. The feedback from the survey will be shared with the new employee's supervisor, Department Head, Administrator and Human Resources.
- **Payroll and Benefits Administration**
- **Meet and Greet with County Administrator**



Group Orientation Sessions for New Employees

- Organizational overview by County Administrator
- Board meet and greet panel discussion
- Icebreaker activity
- Helpful County information
 - History
 - Media and communications
 - Overview of facilities/department functions
 - Interactive quiz on organizational information
- Facilities Management information
 - Health & Safety
- Human Resources topics
 - Labor relations
 - Data privacy
 - Lean
 - Customer service skills



Group Orientation Feedback

Responses

Thank you for taking the time to put the group orientation together

It was very nice to have all the Commissioners there and in several things very interesting. Previous to this job I worked for everyone and jumping into a huge County job I think it was nothing about the County, but I am very interested to learn more by phone or hear about.

The orientation was very long and drawn out. Could have been shorter.

When I started I was provided with an organizational chart and a name which has been helpful.

I would have liked to have been able to file a protection report.

I learned a lot from orientation. I was not familiar with who all the Commissioners were and did not know some of the history that was shared. I did not realize that school credits could be paid.

I thought the orientation was put together and presented very nicely. It offered an opportunity to meet the BEC Commissioners, who we hear a lot about but don't have that opportunity to meet them very often. There was a lot of good information and I thought it was over all interesting. Thank you!

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Things with employees then keep it out of the orientation.

Employee Engagement Initiatives at Blue Earth County



Enhanced Organizational Communication Efforts

Enhanced Organizational Communication Efforts

- E-news
 - First four Tuesdays of the month
 - Blue Earth County News for Employees
 - Blue Earth County Lean/Continuous Improvement
 - Wellness @Work Newsletter
 - Employee Happenings

E-news Publications



Concert on the Courthouse Lawn Event Scheduled for June 23 Bring your family and friends to help celebrate 125 years of the Historic Courthouse!

Blue Earth County is partnering with the Mankato Area Community Band and Blue Earth County Historical Society to host a Concert on the Courthouse Lawn event during the evening of Tuesday, June 23. The Mankato Area Community Band was awarded grant funding through the Mankato Area Foundation to cover costs associated with the event.



The last Concert on the Courthouse Lawn Event took place in June 2008, celebrating Blue Earth County's 155th anniversary and 150 years of Minnesota Statehood.

Activities on June 23 will include exterior architectural tours of the Historic Courthouse from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. (departing every half hour prior to the concert) followed by the Mankato Area Community Band performance at 7:30 p.m. Attendees are reminded to bring blankets and lawn chairs if they wish. Nearby parking will be available at the Historic Courthouse and Vine Adult Community Center lots. In the event of rain, check the Blue Earth County [website](#) for event relocation details.



Blue Earth County's Sheriff's Office receiving recognition on May 20, 2015 for Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) enforcement efforts.

Pictured left to right, Donna Berger, Office of Traffic Safety Director; Ramona Dohman, Department of Public Safety Commissioner; Major Jeff Huettl, State Patrol; Blue Earth County Officers - Deputy Tom Coulter, Captain Rich Murry and Lieutenant Tim Mohr.

Mapleton Police Department, Nicollet County Sheriff's Office, North Mankato Police Department, St. Peter Police Department and Tri-City Police Department (Amboy, Vernon Center, Good Thunder). [Read more...](#)

Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office Awarded for Making Minnesota Roads Safer

Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office was one of 14 agencies, plus the Minnesota State Patrol recently honored for helping reduce traffic fatalities on Minnesota roads.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety (DPS/OTS) presented its Commissioner's Award to the Blue Earth County Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) Enforcement Grant coordinators for their outstanding performance in 2014.

Each of the 14 Blue Earth County TZD Enforcement Grant agencies include; Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office, Eagle Lake Police Department, Janesville Police Department, Lake Crystal Police Department, Le Sueur County Sheriff's Office, Le Sueur Police Department, Madelia Police Department, Madison Lake Police Department, Mankato Department of Public Safety,



Introduction

This Lean/Continuous Improvement email is a monthly email that will introduce you to many resources in the Lean toolbox, share some of Blue Earth County's success stories with you, and provide tips on how to create efficiencies in your day-to-day work. We hope you find the information helpful and encourage you to continually be thinking about ways you can improve processes that you are involved in.

Lean...Continuous Improvement....Huh?

As a County employee you may have heard about Lean, participated in an event, read something somewhere about it, or you may not really be sure what it is all about...

Lean is a time-tested set of tools used to engage employees to reduce waste and defects within processes to increase productivity, reliability, staff morale, and customer service.

Process is sometimes hard to think of conceptually, but it is really a part of everything we do. While we may think that we provide only services – for example returning phone calls, enrolling clients into a program, making traffic stops, assembling packets, performing inspections – those services are products and any product must be “produced” through a system or series of processes. When you think critically about that process and find ways to improve it, even minor improvements can add up to something big.



The Lean Toolbox

One of the many tools in the Lean toolbox is the “5 S’s”. This is a methodology for creating a clean, safe, orderly and high performance work environment. The “5 S’s” of sort, straighten, shine, standardize and sustain can be used at the individual employee level in your office space.


Is there an area in your work world that could benefit from a 5 S review?

E-news Publications



Wellness @ Work

NEWSLETTER



feature: Does this Cause Cancer?

Check out what the science currently says about paint, artificial sweeteners, cell phones and other common items in this month's newsletter.


Find this article beginning on page 1 of this month's [newsletter](#).



active living: Monday Mile

Learn about the Monday Mile - a fun way to jump start your week with a healthy dose of activity. Resources are included, such as a Toolkit to start your own Monday Mile walking group and FREE Walking App suggestions.

Find this article beginning on page 3 of this month's [newsletter](#).



safety: Pay Attention and Drive!

Face the facts about distracted driving: Using a cell phone while driving delays your reaction as much as having an alcohol concentration level of 0.08 percent! Take 2 minutes to watch the Eyes on the Road video in this month's newsletter - it is worth your life to turn off your phone when you start your car.

Find this article beginning on page 4 of this month's [newsletter](#).

Other topics in this month's [newsletter](#) include:

in the news: **Avian Flu in MN Turkeys**

healthy eating: **DISH (Dinner is Solved with Hy-Vee)**



Employee Happenings May 26, 2015

Be informed about what Blue Earth County employees are up to with their comings, goings, and celebrations! Listed below is information you will receive on a monthly basis about new people coming, promotions, transfers, employees leaving, and anniversary dates. Take this opportunity to acknowledge your co-workers as we recognize their service!

New Employees

- [Corey Van Raalte](#), Business Analyst / Application Developer (Information Technology) - Started May 11
- [Sophie Langseth](#), Library Clerk (on-call) (Library) - Started May 13
- [Carol Carter](#), Child Care Specialist (Human Services) - Started May 19
- [Pamela Hahn](#), Accountant (Highway) - Started May 26

Promotions / Transfers

- [Angelina Wicks](#), 911 Dispatcher to Sergeant (Sheriff) Started - May 11
- [Tennelle Wieneke](#), 911 Dispatcher to Sergeant (Sheriff) Started - May 13
- [Staci Vollmer](#), 911 Dispatcher to Sergeant (Sheriff) Started - May 14

Employees Leaving

- [Stacey Feser](#), Environmental Health / Wetland Specialist (Environmental Services) Departed - May 1

Anniversary Dates

- [Gene Haefner](#), Road Design Specialist, 39 years
- [Karen Myers](#), Deputy Director/License Center, 28 years
- [Nancy Braun](#), Taxpayer Services Lead Worker, 28 years
- [Susan Sheeran](#), Financial Assistance Specialist, 26 years
- [Michael Hildebrandt](#), Social Worker, 22 years
- [Patrick McDermott](#), County Attorney, 21 years

Benefits of E-news Communication Efforts

- Helps facilitate consistency with employee communications and offers the ability to better brand organizational messages to stand apart from ordinary e-mails
- Statistics can be analyzed to see how many employees are opening the content to better gauge effectiveness of each communication piece
- Messaging can be created ahead of time and scheduled for distribution for greater efficiency

Questions

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