



Beyond “Business As Usual”: A Case Study

How one Illinois village saved millions—and improved services for its citizens

The Problem

Too often, local governments go about “business as usual” for years, even when they could get a better deal for the same or better level of service. Recently, many communities have started questioning their “business as usual” routine as it becomes increasingly clear that repeatedly raising taxes to generate additional revenue is not politically tolerable—or sustainable—and cannot support the growing cost of government. Local governments hitting this tipping point, and others on the path to it, need to change the way they operate or face total financial collapse.

Our Solution

In order to survive financially and provide the services and quality residents expect, municipalities throughout Illinois must adopt new guiding principles and best practices. Five years ago, the Village of Glenview recognized this reality. By establishing and following the principles and best practices listed below, Glenview’s public servants have achieved tremendous cost-saving and quality-driven results:

- *Long-range planning for budgeting and programming.*
- *Defining core competencies.* What is the local government designed to do and what does it do well? For what purpose does it exist?
- *Ongoing, in-depth analysis of programs, services, and processes.* Management must ask: Do programs make sense? On what basis were program standards established? Are service levels appropriate for the needs

of the customer (in the Village’s case, the community/residents)? What are the true costs involved? Is the service necessary? Is this the best way to provide this service?

- *An organizational structure that flows out of organizational goals.* Staffing levels, service delivery methods, positions and department structure must be justified in terms of the organizational objectives achieved.

- *Cost-efficient service provision that doesn’t compromise quality.*

Why This Works

If it had not changed course from “business as usual,” the Village of Glenview would be facing budget deficits in excess of \$10 million per year, or approximately 20% of the Corporate Fund budget. Without the ability to raise revenues of this magnitude, the Village would have likely needed to make deep cuts (reductions and eliminations) to services.

Today, because the Village made these changes, it is financially solvent, cost-efficient, and continually strives for high quality services at the best price. Unlike before, the Board of Trustees can now generally know a year ahead of time what the future might hold and uses that information to guide prudent decision-making. Also, following new guidelines and principles enables the Village to provide timely, meaningful information and feedback to its ultimate customers: the residents and taxpayers it serves.

Municipalities across Illinois need to follow the Village of Glenview’s lead and establish these best practices and principles as guidelines, and by doing so, put themselves on a winning, cost-effective and quality-driven track. “Business as usual” may be costing taxpayers far more than they realize. It’s time to make a change.

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