

VI – MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to present core management concepts that will provide an overall framework and context for the detailed management recommendations that are presented in this report. The proposed management framework is built around four interrelated axes:

- Providing authority commensurate with performance
- Ensuring accountability
- Promoting collaboration and teamwork
- Leveraging scarce resources

While each of these key features of the proposed management framework is important, a tension exists among them. For example, providing departmental units with the authority to operate with increased autonomy should be a goal, yet appropriate limits on that autonomy must be established to ensure desired results are achieved. In addition, the recommended emphasis on accountability focuses attention on individual performance while collaboration requires staff to work together effectively in groups. The recommended management framework, therefore, is structured to ensure that an appropriate balance among autonomy, accountability, collaboration and the need to leverage scarce resources can be achieved and sustained over the long-term.

The sections that follow describe in greater detail the proposed management framework. Each section begins with a review of the current situation and then describes a core component of the recommended management structure.

PROVIDING AUTHORITY COMMENSURATE WITH PERFORMANCE

Current Situation

As briefly discussed in Chapter IV, even senior leaders in the department currently operate with very little autonomy. Even some relatively mundane decisions are reviewed by successive layers of management often up to and including the chief of police. The perspective of most employees is that almost any decision is subject to second guessing and, as a consequence, many managers are hesitant to act decisively or to take actions – especially on personnel related issues – that may be subject to critical review from their superiors.

These findings are strongly supported by the results of the employee survey. When asked to consider whether managers and supervisors have the authority to make the decisions needed to improve the police department's performance, 58.7 percent of the respondents to the employee survey disagree or strongly disagree that chief level officers have this authority, 69.7 percent disagree or strongly disagree that mid-managers have this authority and 67.9 percent disagree or strongly disagree that first-line supervisors have this authority. Perhaps even more telling is that a relatively high percentage of employees do not think managers and leaders use the authority they have been granted to improve the department's performance. 82.1 percent of the survey

respondents disagree or strongly disagree that chief level officers use the authority they have been granted, 61.3 percent disagree or strongly disagree that mid-managers use the authority they have been granted, and 51.0 percent disagree or strongly disagree that first line supervisors use the authority they have been granted

Recommendation

Providing decentralized decision-makers with the authority to make decisions that will improve police services at the local level is not only a sound management concept but, in a city as large and diverse as the City of Dallas, is the only practical approach to managing police services. Regardless of the skills, motivation and experience of centralized leaders, efforts to control all aspects of police services in an organization as large and complex as the Dallas Police Department are doomed to failure. In addition, if services are to be tailored to address local needs and to address local crime issues decision-making authority must be decentralized.

The proposed management framework, and the organizational and management recommendations detailed throughout this report, assumes that real, substantive authority should be assigned to division and (in some cases) unit managers. In particular, these managers should have the authority to determine how staff resources should be used and deployed to achieve department objectives while also addressing local needs. In addition, these managers should have the authority to make substantive decisions about personnel, discipline, the mix of resources employed, and policing strategies.

While decentralizing authority is a long-term goal, in the short-term care must be taken to ensure that the managers and leaders in whom this authority is vested have the skills, experience and abilities to make effective use of this authority. While managers who achieve desired performance goals should be granted significant autonomy, managers who have not proven their ability to achieve desired goals should be given a “shorter leash.” Authority should be viewed as a privilege that is earned, not a “right” that all managers are granted regardless of their performance. (The next section discusses the role of an effective accountability system in limiting the authority of decentralized managers who have not yet exhibited the competence to effectively exercise that authority.)

The requirement that unit and division level operational plans be developed and that performance against these plans be monitored on a regular basis (discussed in Chapter V) provides a mechanism senior managers can use to limit the authority of unit and division managers who have not yet demonstrated their ability to effectively exercise that authority. By providing an increasingly prescriptive review of these operational plans – up to and including drafting the plan itself – senior managers can protect the department from granting authority to managers who are not yet ready to assume that authority. In addition, operational plan reviews for managers who are less able to achieve performance goals should be more intensive and more frequent than for other managers.

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY

Current Situation

While interview results and the results of the employee survey suggest that individual employees and managers may be held accountable for their actions, more often than not this accountability has a negative connotation. Indeed, from the perspective of many employees and managers, punishment may be meted out by vindictive superiors on an individual basis but accountability on a departmentwide basis is sorely lacking. These findings are supported by the results of the employee survey. Seven out of ten survey respondents (70.1 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that “police department employees at all levels are held accountable for their performance.”

Recommendation

In many organizations decentralized authority, while embraced from a theoretical perspective, is not fully implemented. One of the primary reasons is that the risks associated with transferring authority to decentralized managers are perceived as being too great. In a fully decentralized environment centralized managers have only a limited ability to prevent decentralized units from devising ineffective policing strategies, misusing resources, or creating opportunities for malfeasance through ineffective management and oversight practices. Consequently, centralized managers – who know that they will be held ultimately accountable for the organization’s performance – are unwilling to relinquish total control of key functions and assign them to decentralized units.

These risks are not illusory. If individual units do not function effectively in a decentralized environment money will be wasted and the services citizens receive will suffer. On the other hand, in the Dallas Police Department, opportunities to substantially improve performance are likely to be lost unless significant decision making authority is decentralized. By establishing an accountability system that supports efforts to decentralize authority while minimizing the risks associated with poor performance is the best way to achieve an appropriate balance between the risks and rewards associated with implementing a decentralized management structure.

An effective accountability system takes as its central premise that decision-making authority should be commensurate with competence:

- Units that perform as expected should be given increased autonomy
- Units that do not perform as expected should receive assistance
- Corrective action should be taken in units that repeatedly fail to achieve performance expectations

The primary focus of the accountability system should be to help all organizational units become more successful.

An effective accountability system should provide for an ongoing assessment of the performance of each departmental unit against the specific goals and objectives that

have been established for that unit (consistent with the department's overall goals and objectives). In addition, the accountability system should provide mechanisms for supporting units that struggle to meet expectations and for reconstituting units that repeatedly fall short of expectations. This approach ensures that the risks associated with decentralizing authority are minimized – only units that have demonstrated their ability to perform successfully are granted a significant level of autonomy. In addition, the accountability system establishes a structure for providing the support needed for all departmental units to progress to the point where they can exercise more authority and function more autonomously.

Even units that have been granted significant autonomy should not be able to do whatever they want to do in whatever way they want to do it. In addition to “bottom line” performance expectations, standards relating to policies and procedures, personnel practices, administrative requirements, and fiscal management, should be established centrally and managers should be required to comply with these standards.

PROMOTING COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK

Current Situation

While the staff assigned to some individual units work well together and managers and staff across some organizational units have fostered effective working relationships, an emphasis on collaboration and teamwork does not currently pervade the department. Part of this results from a lack of leadership at the top. If department staff perceive that senior leaders are not working well together they are much more likely to follow suit. (As discussed in Chapter IV, the strong consensus of employees is that department leaders and mid-managers do not work together effectively.) However, this problem cannot be laid entirely at the feet of the department's leadership. With some exceptions, line workers also lack an *esprit de corps*. The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that interviewees report officers may keep themselves out of service rather than respond to calls to cover for other officers. In addition, interviewees report that some officers feel no compunction about calling in sick (when they are not ill) even if doing so means that, due to staff shortages, other officers may not be allowed to take planned vacation days.

Recommendation

Given the current situation, fostering a culture of collaboration and teamwork in the Dallas Police Department will take time. By focusing attention on achieving clearly defined unit goals and objectives – and by consistently communicating the importance of teamwork at all levels in achieving these goals – teamwork and collaboration within organizational units can be enhanced over time. To facilitate collaboration across organizational units the department should identify opportunities for managers, supervisors and line staff from different organizational units to work together on common issues and problems. The goal of these efforts should be to support the development of formal and informal networks throughout the department that, over time, managers, supervisors and staff will increasingly rely on when working to address problems and challenges. As discussed in Chapter IV, through chat rooms, bulletin boards and group e-mail lists technology can be used to support these networks.

LEVERAGING SCARCE RESOURCES

Current Situation

Leveraging scarce resources is not a “top of mind” issue for most department leaders and managers. Certainly, managers and leaders at all levels within the department focus considerable attention on issues related to personnel administration and assignments. Much less attention, and for some managers no attention, is devoted to thinking about how to leverage scarce resources to maximize the impact those resources will have on the services Dallas citizens receive. As previously discussed, part of this problem results from the fact that goals and objectives for the department have not been clearly defined. To optimize the use of resources one must first understand the goals against which resource use should be optimized. However, even if departmental goals and objectives were clearly established, it is not clear that determining how best to use resources to achieve those goals would be the focus of attention for most department managers and leaders.

Recommendation

Given the reality that funding for the Dallas Police Department is scarce, it is essential that the proposed management framework include features that encourage the leveraging of scarce department resources. The recommendations presented in Chapter V relating to the development of strategic and operational plans and the need to use these plans to link resource allocation to results were developed, in part, to address this important issue.