Chapter XII

Tampa, Florida
Internet-Based
Customer Service Center

Steven M. Cantler, City of Tampa, Florida, USA

Executive Summary

The City of Tampa, Florida developed and implemented an innovative Web-enabled enterprise-wide solution, addressing basic requests for services with centralized citizen access to four major areas: submission of requests, opinions, recommendations, and inquiries; online payments; public records research; and automatic re-direction to non-city agency services. The TampaGov Customer Service Center resulted from a need to effectively track and manage the wide variety of service requests and communication exchanges between citizens and the city staff who serve them. Three primary issues were addressed: (1) Citizens are confronted with daily life events and do not know which government agencies to contact; (2) Citizens want access to government services at their convenience (24/7); and (3) Citizens want to know what is happening to their request. To be successful, the project needed to provide a flexible, comprehensive method of communication and collaboration with citizens. This objective was met.
Background

About Tampa, Florida

Tampa is the largest city in Hillsborough County, the county seat, and the third most populous city in Florida. Tampa is located on the west coast of Florida, approximately 200 miles northwest of Miami, 180 miles southwest of Jacksonville, and 20 miles northeast of St. Petersburg. In 2003, the population of the city was estimated at 313,000 (United States Census Bureau, n.d.), approximately one-third of the total for Hillsborough County.

Tampa’s economy is founded on a diverse base that includes tourism, agriculture, construction, finance, health care, government, technology, and the port. The Tampa Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), consisting of Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, and Hernando counties, is a growth market. In 2004, the Tampa MSA population was estimated at 2,563,000 (Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce, n.d.a). This places the Tampa MSA in the top 25 nationally, second among Southeastern metropolitan areas, and the largest in Florida (Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce, n.d.b).

City of Tampa Government

The City of Tampa has a mayor-council form of government. The mayor and seven council members are elected by the voters of Tampa to serve for terms of four years. The Mayor’s Office renders services required of the executive branch of city government including administrative functions and public relations. The mayor provides direction to department heads, administers city ordinances and council resolutions, meets with the public, and provides information to matters of community concern. The City Council, the legislative branch of city government, is responsible for enacting ordinances and resolutions that the Mayor of Tampa administers as the city’s chief executive. The council’s goals are to provide responsible legislation, ensure the safe, efficient, and fair operation of city government, and to provide for the general health, welfare, and safety of the citizens of Tampa.

The city delivers a full range of municipal services as provided by state statute and city charter. These include public safety, water, wastewater, solid waste, parking, public improvements, cultural, recreational, and general administrative services. For fiscal year 2006 (FY06), which began October 1, 2005, 4,958 (City of Tampa, n.d.b) full-time positions were budgeted to provide the necessary services to citizens. The FY06 budget totaled $674 million. The revenue sources included: 58% from taxes, 37% from user fees (water, solid waste, wastewater, and parking), and 5% from bonds and other sources. The targeted expenditures included: 47% for public safety, 14% for parks and recreation, 12% for capital improvements, 11% for central government, 10% for public works, and 6% for debt service.
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