SOP for Project Management Team

Enhancing services to improve long-term outcomes for system-involved youth and families is a key strategic objective of the agency (Flowers & McDaniels, 2019). Creating standards for project development and implementation will improve the project management process. This improvement will allow divisions and offices to operate and collaborate more effectively and efficiently. Developing standards will reduce redundancies and enhance the services provided to youth thereby supporting positive long-term outcomes.

1. Data Collection

Data was collected in an effort to uncover the number of projects presently in process in Strategic Operations as well as the six divisions and five offices within the Department of Juvenile Justice (Ordiorne, 2019). The data collected would be analyzed to determine if the agency would benefit from the creation of a project policy and Standard Operational Procedures to provide guidance and governance on how DJJ accepts, plans, executes, documents/tracks, and monitors projects. Each member of the Executive Management Team and Associate Deputy Directors assigned an administrator or senior leader to collect information on projects currently in process in their respective divisions and offices (Ordiorne, 2019)[1]. Administrators were instructed to consider projects with a definitive beginning and end date that produced a product, service, or met a goal. Administrators were asked to identify project management or tracking tools that were utilized during the project life cycle.

Senior leaders from ten of the twelve divisions and offices participated and met with the Project Manager to review project information for their respective divisions/offices. Administrators identified projects, the staff person(s) assuming leadership roles on the projects, defined timelines when known, and indicated which tracking tools, if any, were being utilized. To assist in the organization of the data collected, a project tracker was created in Microsoft Teams. This SharePoint tracker allowed the Project Manager to input the following data points: Project Name, Division/Office, Project Description, Project Leader, Anticipated Completion Date, Percentage Complete, Budget, Status, Updates, and Alerts. Alerts included icons depicting: Over Budget, Needs Reviewed, Youth-Impacting, and Multi-Divisional Collaboration Required. This data tracker was created in Microsoft Teams to allow the Project Manager the ability to share information with Administrators and Deputies while allowing those leaders the opportunity to review and add updates to the projects submitted[2]. This zero-cost data hub for projects also provides project transparency and facilitate immediate communication.

Divisions and Offices submitted 76 projects for review. Of those 76 projects, 63 were found to be unique projects. Ten projects required cross divisional support and were listed by multiple divisions/offices. Three projects were listed by Divisions as individual, independent projects, but upon further review, were determined to be the same project in three divisions operating independently, exposing a redundancy.

As expected, the largest number of projects, 29, originated from Project Management, Information and Security, and Information Technology departments within Strategic Operations (see Figure 1). The Office of Professional Standards reported nine projects. The Division of Rehabilitative Services reported seven projects. The Division of Community Services and Office of Institutional Programming each reported five projects. The Division of Education and Workforce Development reported four projects. The Division of Institutional Services reported two projects. The Office of Human Resources and Division of Investigative Services each reported one project. The Division of Legal Services reported zero open projects presently.
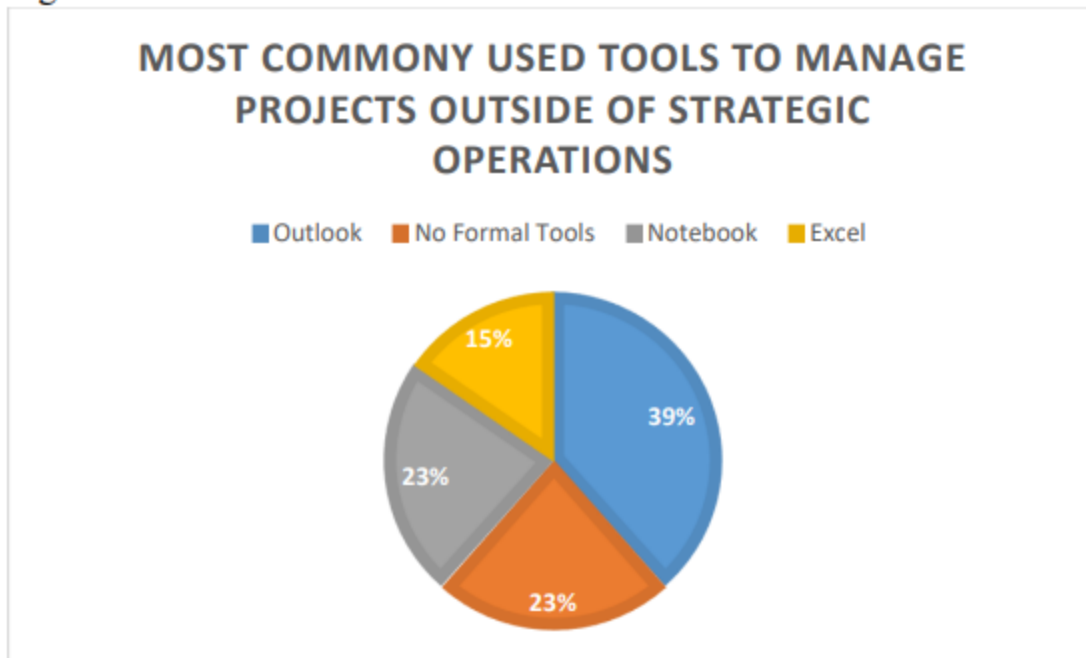
Figure 1

Strategic Operations reported utilizing Microsoft Project with Gantt Charts, Microsoft

Teams, and a Microsoft Excel data hub designed specifically for project documentation, tracking, Strategic Operations Professional Standards Rehabilitative Services Community Services Institutional Programming Education and Workforce Development Institutional Services Human Resources Investigative Services Legal Services Number of Projects in Each Division PM POLICY AND SOPS 6 and sharing. Some Divisions noted that no formal project management tracking or reporting tools were routinely utilized. Of those who identified tools, the tools most frequently utilized included routine office organizational tools such as Microsoft Outlook calendars to track project meetings and schedule project work time, paper notebooks to document project movement, updates and to-do lists, and Microsoft Excel to keep data organized (Figure 2).

Figure 2

MOST COMMONY USED TOOLS TO MANAGE PROJECTS OUTSIDE OF STRATEGIC OPERATIONS

- Outlook
- No Formal Tools
- Notebook
- Excel

Outlook 39%, No Formal Tools 23%, Notebook 23%, Excel 15%

2. Data Analysis

Strategic Operations houses the Information Technology, Information Security, and Project Management departments. Strategic Operations houses the highest concentration of employees with formal project management training, education, and experience. The largest, most complex projects identified as having the greatest agency-impact by the Executive Director are managed by Strategic Operations. The data collected indicated, when reviewing projects based solely by volume, the majority of projects are developed outside of Strategic Operations where leaders self-identify as program managers or project leaders and not project managers. Lack of formal project management education and experience is not an indicator of performance standards. This data is presented to highlight administrators are leading projects in the absence of standard operating procedures and policy that would provide oversight and guidance to support efforts to create quality projects.

Quality is the process required to ensure projects will satisfy the needs for which they were undertaken (McMahon & Lane, 2001). Creating policy and standard operating procedures to help define language and concepts such as project stages and scope will help program managers and project leaders prevent scope creep while more accurately defining project parameters. Consistent application of project management standard operating procedures is critical to consistently achieving successful quality outcomes.

The Project Tracker is user-friendly, requires minimal data entry, and includes a dashboard with easy to read alerts to highlight project milestones, budgetary information, cross divisional information, and requests for additional resources.

3. Implementation Plan

A Project Management Policy and subsequent Standard Operating Procedures would prove beneficial in providing guidance to Senior Leaders, Program Managers, and Project Leaders while establishing a standard for how the Department of Juvenile Justice accepts, plans, executes, and monitors projects. In order to ensure this process is inclusive and addresses the identified needs of the agency, the Project Management department should assemble a Project Management think thank group to include employees who typically lead projects in other divisions to share ideas and develop standards.

This group will meet biweekly for six months to research and share best practices in project management, including those in other state agencies, in an effort to develop a policy to best meet the needs of the agency as a whole. This group will review commonly utilized project management tools, identify costs associated, and make recommendations for either commercially available project management tools, the sharing of tools presently available to the agency, or the development and creation of new tools by DJJ staff. Costs associated with off the shelf solutions, if recommended, would need to be explored further.

Potential obstacles for implementing a project management policy and standard operating procedures include identifying and obtaining buy in and securing the time commitment required from staff to participate in the policy development think tank group. This may be combatted through continued conversations highlighting the benefits and supports the policy would provide to their respective division/office. Increasing communication, facilitating successful cross divisional collaborations, reducing redundancies, and increasing efficiency will be cited as benefits. Scheduling can be a challenge as leaders are often committed to existing projects and programs and may not respond favorably to an additional meeting in an already full day.

4. Evaluation Method

To determine efficacy of the created policy and related SOP, comparisons may be made between the data collected prior to policy creation against data collected post policy creation. If the policy is meeting the stated goals, reviewers will find a reduction in project redundancy evidenced by a lack of multiple independent projects with the same goal occurring simultaneously. Reviewers will also note an increase in cross-divisional collaboration and PM POLICY AND SOPS 11 information sharing as evidenced by the use of created tools. An increase in cross divisional collaboration may also be evaluated by reviewing data in the hub to establish the same project has not been entered into the hub/tracking tool by multiple

division/offices. Finally, staff may be surveyed to determine if the policy and subsequent supports created through the SOP have been beneficial in navigating project management.

5. Summary and Recommendations

There are multiple projects in various stages of completion within most Divisions and Offices at the Department of Juvenile Justice. While the largest projects with the greatest agency impact, as determined by the Executive Director, are led by teams within Strategic Operations, 52 % of all projects are managed by staff outside of Strategic Operations. Staff identified as leaders of projects outside of Strategic Operations do not self-identify as Project Managers with formal education or experience.

Presently the agency does not have a project management policy or standard operation procedures to provide structure, standards, guidance and governance to leaders who manage projects outside of Strategic Operations. The tools available to Strategic Operations project managers are not readily accessible to staff outside of Strategic Operations. The development of policies and procedures to help define how the Agency accepts, plans, executes, and monitors projects would prove beneficial. Developing a standard and following one protocol would ensure appropriate project planning, development, execution, tracking and monitoring both within Strategic Operations and Divisions and Offices throughout the Department of Juvenile Justice.

In conclusion, the development of a project management policy, standards, and the sharing of project management tools will reduce project redundancies, increase efficiency and cross divisional collaboration while supporting the agency's strategic goals. Creating policy and PM POLICY AND SOPS 12 standard operating procedures to help define language and concepts such as project stages and scope will help program managers and project leaders prevent scope creep while more accurately defining project parameters.