

Case Study

GroupSystems Success Story: City of San Antonio, TX

GroupSystems Key in Budgeting for a Major U.S. City

The City of San Antonio (the seventh largest city in the United States and second largest city in Texas) administered a budget of \$1.7 billion to serve 1.3 million citizens in 2004. San Antonio's annual budget development process serves as the foundation for the allocation of resources available. This allocation provides numerous municipal services with the money that they need to fund their respective programs and projects.

Prior to public hearings on the proposed budgets, the Mayor and City Council convene to provide staff with guidance and prioritization while the operating budget is developed. Term limits for the Mayor and the ten City Council members created an additional challenge for the City Manager and surrounding staff to quickly educate new council members about the business and economics of San Antonio.

Previous Method

Various methods with varying degrees of success have been used since the budgetary goal-setting sessions began. Round table discussions, group presentations, and offsite retreats were all tried. Although many improvements were achieved over successive years, this preliminary budgeting process still remained chaotic, inefficient and very stressful for the decision makers and staff involved. Though decisions were eventually made, no efficient or satisfactory method was found to allow all decision makers to have equal say during discussions of budget priorities and other issues.

GroupSystems Solution

In order to introduce Group Systems software for this critical City government task, the Mayor, City Council and staff were briefed by the interim CIO, Richard Varn, on the previous usage of Group Systems software to develop technology action plans for City departments. City staff prepared and distributed a detailed list of City services for the Mayor and Council to review and research prior to the budgetary goal-setting session.

Following their preparation the Mayor and ten City Council members assembled for a one day meeting, open to the public and the media. The morning session was used by the decision-makers to simultaneously comment, respond to comments and categorize services by "new", "change", "discontinue" or "increase funding". The afternoon session was devoted to voting on agreement with the service categorization, budgetary priority for the service and the implementation timeframe for funding the service. Comments and votes were displayed publicly on a large screen for all involved to see.

"This was the best, most productive budget goal setting session we have ever had"

Eric Walsh, Assistant to the City Manager
-City of San Antonio, TX

Customer

City of San Antonio, TX

Business Benefits of GroupSystems

- Equal opportunity for all decision-makers to participate in discussion, voting, and proposal of new services simultaneously rather than sequentially.
- Statistics seamlessly gathered showed difference of opinion, as well as the majority vote
- Staff had a record of the collaboration comments, not just the final results.
- Budget decision makers were able to experience first-hand the business value of information technology tools.



Expediting Innovation

GroupSystems

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