



The City of Coral Springs: A Journey Toward Excellence, Accelerated by ActiveStrategy Enterprise Software

A Case Study | 2009

620 W. Germantown Pike • Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462 • 484.690.0700 • www.activestrategy.com

The City of Coral Springs was one of the first local governments to embrace the Baldrige performance excellence model. The city's successful application of these methodologies has made it one of the most admired public sector organizations in the world, boasting enviable results across all types of indicators, as well as the nation's highest award for organizational excellence – the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. ActiveStrategy Enterprise software supports the Baldrige principles, which are put into practice daily at this unique organization.

Background

The City of Coral Springs is a planned community of about 130,000 residents in South Florida. In FY 2007 the city's budget was \$134 million and it employed roughly 800 FTEs. Coral Springs is a very young city – not typical of Florida; the city's median age is 35 and about one third of its residents are under the age of 18. Even less typical is the journey the city embarked upon in 1994. At the time, the city found itself managing politically sensitive crises, versus charting and achieving its own plans. There were also two major issues looming on the horizon: explosive growth followed by build-out and no growth, and a community intolerant of tax increases. The City Manager began looking for ways to jolt the city out of the “government-as-usual” mode so it would be better prepared to excel in what looked to be some challenging years ahead.

The city's first exposure to the Baldrige criteria came through their state-level program, called Florida Sterling. The model fit in well with some of the other cultural changes the organization was making: flattening the organization's structure, instituting pay-for-performance, and creating a community “visioning” effort to design a bright future for the city.

The Baldrige/Sterling Model

Baldrige, as well as nearly all state-level performance excellence programs, share a common set of seven main criteria areas that are interrelated: 1) Leadership; 2) Strategic Planning; 3) Customer Focus; 4) Measurement and Analysis; 5) Workforce Focus; 6) Process Management; and 7) Results. The systems in the first six categories work together to achieve the seventh category: measurable overall results for the organization. It is a systematic and holistic approach that needs to be well documented and repeatable. Systems should be modified and “continuously improved” until they produce results that are measurable over both short- and long-term time frames.



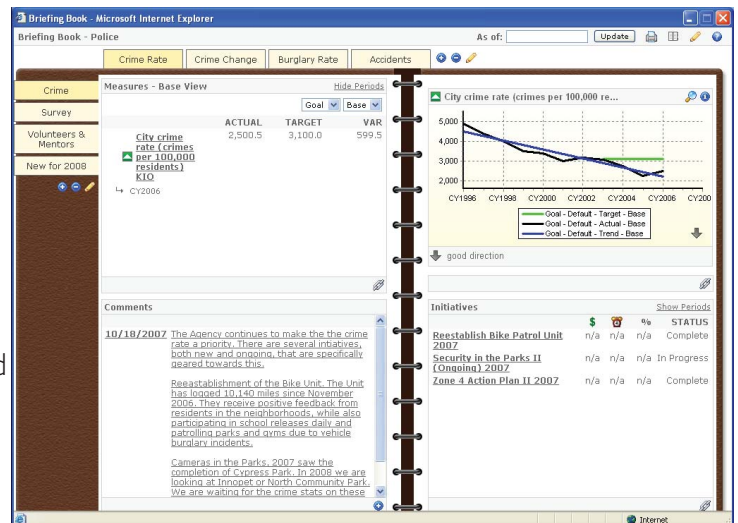
Applying the Criteria at Coral Springs

Early on in the journey, “Coral Springs saw only ‘trees’. No one could have described the ‘forest’ or how the criteria areas support each other. But criteria by sub-criteria, processes were developed, and little by little, staff came to understand how it all comes together,” explained Christine Heflin-Ewing, who served as the Internal Consultant on Performance Excellence at the City of Coral Springs during their journey.

To bring the criteria together and make the model work for the city, leaders blended several of the Baldrige principles into their own business model, which drove a new focus on listening to customers and feedback loops, a much stronger process for strategic planning, and a much more rigorous approach to performance measurement.

All three of these new focus areas were aided by the development of cascaded Scorecards, which deployed the strategic plan, helped maintain focus, and enabled the city to use information and data more effectively.

The city selected ActiveStrategy Enterprise software to automate their Scorecard framework. ActiveStrategy software helped city management monitor performance in areas that were most critical to achieving their strategy, compare their current performance to best-in-class levels, identify gaps, use data to identify the root causes of the gaps, institute improvement programs, and then monitor corrective action to ensure sustained results. With KIO (Key Intended Outcome) and Departmental scorecards automated in the software and reviewed regularly by more than 25 leaders, ActiveStrategy Enterprise software helped identify how performance in core processes affected strategic measures, tracked associated improvement efforts, and facilitated ongoing regular business reviews, primarily using the Briefing Book views.

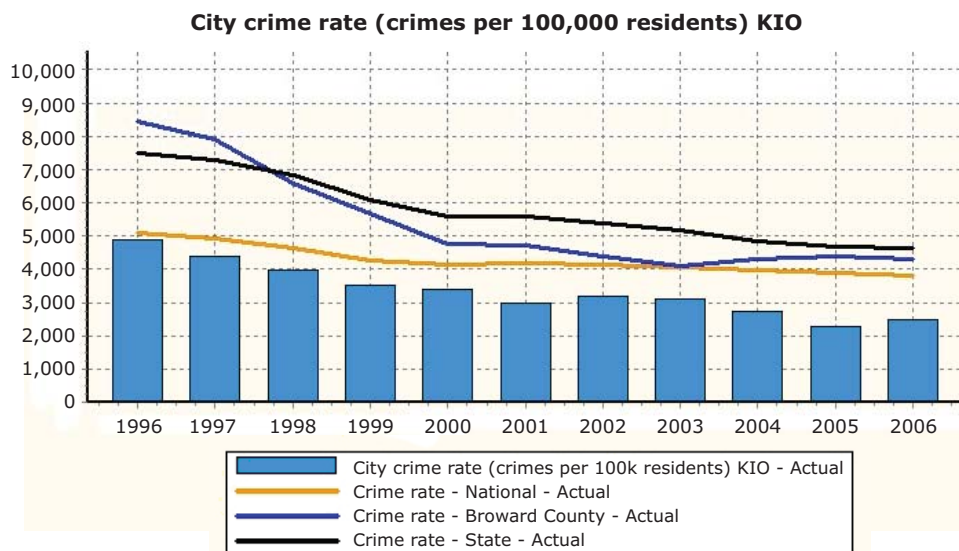


“Because the City of Coral Springs is data-driven and results-oriented, it is important for us to post our results for all employees to see,” City Manager Mike Levinson said. “It is even more important to examine our results compared to other cities that we benchmark against. This has proven to be a strong motivational tool for our organization. If we find that our competition is performing better, we strive to improve our processes and close the gap. If we find that our organization is performing better, we are motivated to broaden the margin and our competitive advantage.”

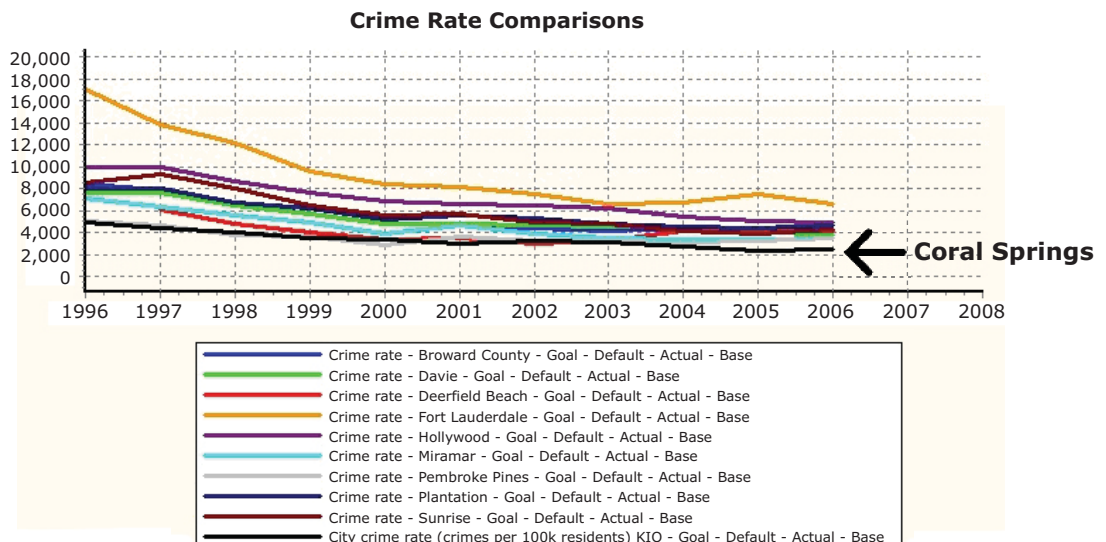
Using Data More Effectively

The Baldrige model specifies that data must be accessible, because when leaders and employees at all levels have access to timely, accurate, relevant data, the organization can use the data to make better decisions. If an organization's leaders must wait for data analysts and/or IT personnel to gather, interpret, and create reports, valuable time and insights can be lost. With ActiveStrategy Enterprise, Coral Springs data became more accessible, allowing the city to make data-driven decisions. The city uses the software to maintain better visibility of key measures, which lets them compare themselves to key benchmarks, drill down to determine contributors to any under-performing measures, institute corrective actions, and track improvement.

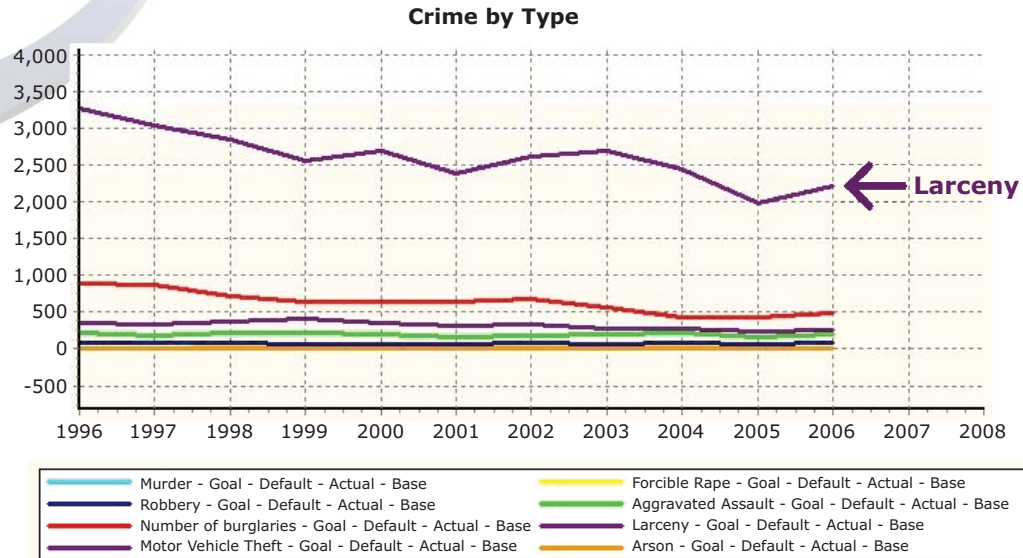
In just one example of improved insights gleaned through data accessibility, Coral Springs noticed that city crime rates started to creep up slightly in 2006.



The first step was to see if this could be part of a regional or national trend, so they looked at comparisons in the software and found that, while they were still lower than neighboring communities, the Coral Springs upswing was not attributable to a general upward trend:



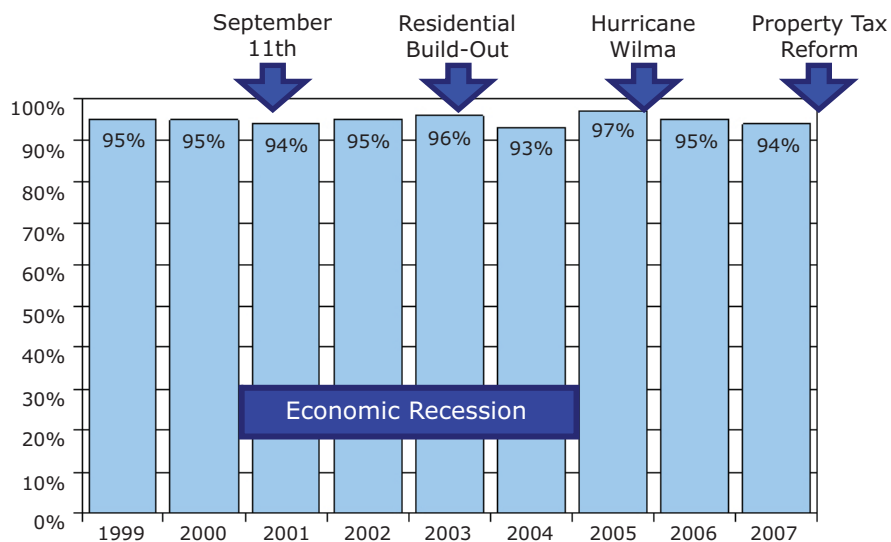
Through further drill-down in the software, the city identified a particular type of crime that was on the rise:



Through further analysis, the city identified an identity theft ring and put preventative measures in place to successfully reverse the trend.

What Does Success Look Like at Coral Springs?

- Satisfied **customers** (customer service ratings: 93% resident, 97% business) in good times and bad.



- **Low tax rate** (lowest of similar cities)
- **AAA bond credit rating** (by all three major agencies)
- **Low crime rate** (cited as one of the nation's lowest by Morgan Quitno Press)
- Happy, motivated **employees** (97% satisfaction rate)



The Journey

Like all organizations, Coral Springs' Baldrige journey has taken time and never truly ends. The city applied for the Florida Governor's Sterling Award in 1995 and again in 1996 before becoming the first government recipient in 1997. The positive impact of the criteria and the award, as well as the constructive feedback process, inspired the city to apply again. In 2003 they became the first two-time recipient of the Sterling Award. In 2006 they participated in the Baldrige program's Pilot Project, which tested the program's applicability within government. They received a site visit in 2006 and were awarded the Baldrige in 2007, the first time government organizations were eligible.

Despite having already achieved the nation's highest honor for organizational quality and performance excellence, the city's journey continues. The drive to continually improve is embedded into the city's culture, it is reinforced by its leaders, and it is supported on a daily basis by tools including ActiveStrategy Enterprise.