



## CITY OF AURORA



## xQ AND GOAL CLARITY IN THE CITY OF AURORA

### Background

The City of Aurora in the United States is Illinois' second largest city. With a population of over 162,000, it is served by 1,200 city employees whose efforts have helped it rank as *Money Magazine's* 2006 pick as one of the 'Best Places to Live' in the United States Under the leadership of newly appointed Mayor Thomas Weisner, the leaders of the City of Aurora are seeking to improve the quality of life for all of citizens. After joining Dr. Stephen R. Covey at the Youth Summit at Aurora University, Mayor Weisner partnered with FranklinCovey to ascertain the execution gaps within the city government. After administering the xQ organizational health assessment survey, the Mayor realized that city employees were committed to improving city services but lacked clarity around what success was. In short, they did not share a clear set of priorities and goals.

### Intervention

As the Mayor and department heads began clarifying their strategic goals, they discovered that there was a broadly held belief among the workers that goals "just get handed down from above." This proved to be a substantial barrier that had to be addressed with real action and not just platitudes. The city leaders involved all 1,200 city employees in crafting their top three goals:

Goal #1: Reduce shootings by 20 percent;

Goal #2: Reduce by 20 percent the resolution time for citizen requests from all City divisions.

Goal #3: Revitalize the Fox River Corridor by approving a minimum of 650 new residential units and, create one acre of open space for the Corridor.

The City had partnered with federal agencies in the prior year, and gun shootings had already decreased substantially, so achieving another 20 percent was

seen as a lofty goal that would require new and different behaviors from all City departments, not just the police department. This required a shift in attitude from “it’s not my job” to creatively figuring out how each department could reduce shootings in their respective regions.

For example, as patrol officers increased warrant attempts and traffic stops in key areas where the majority of shootings occurred, the Department of Public Property developed a goal to replace street lights in “high-impact” areas within 25 hours, rather than the typical time of 90 hours. City departments developed gang awareness training and new processes for providing gang intelligence to the police department when servicing customers. With the deep involvement of City employees, the City began cascading goals to the departments in consultative work sessions facilitated by FranklinCovey. City leaders and their teams used *The 4 Disciplines of Execution* process to drive new behaviors and results, focus attention on the three “Wildly Important Goals” and critical measures, track results through scoreboards, and drive accountability.

## Results

After eight months:

Goal #1: Shootings declined over 21 percent (YOY) against a goal of 20 percent. The time it took street lights to be replaced declined from 90 hours to 6.6 hours against a goal of 25 hours.

Goal #2: Some divisions saw as high as a 50 percent improvement in resolution time for citizen requests against a goal of 20 percent.

Goal #3: More than 850 condominiums were approved against a goal of 650, and the City is within 1 percent of reaching its goal of assembling one acre of open space for the Fox River Corridor.

With all 1,200 City employees given the opportunity to both participate in the initial survey and in the follow-on work sessions, the City has established both clarity and commitment toward key priorities and established relevant goals throughout City government. After hearing about the city goals, a citizen from Aurora wrote into the local newspaper, stating, “I think this initiative is an extremely important program for our great city. The thought behind it and its goals are as compelling and proactive as can be. This type of program is paramount in getting all of the city’s employees and residents rowing in the same direction. It can also be a model for other communities.” ■

