



Board of County Commissioners - Staff Report

Meeting Date: May 4, 2021
Submitting Dept: Administration

Presenter: Alyssa Watkins
Subject: Consideration of a Memorandum of Understanding between Teton County and the Centre for Public Impact Regarding the Failing Forward in County Government Program

Statement / Purpose:

Consideration of a Memorandum of Understanding between Teton County and the Centre for Public Impact regarding the Failing Forward in County Government Program.

Background / Description (Pros & Cons):

In early 2020, the Centre for Public Impact (CPI) partnered with the Aspen Institute Center for Urban Innovation to explore why it is so difficult to learn from failure in the public sector and what public servants can do about it. The bulk of the findings were informed by six local governments, 20 departments, and over 150 public servants who participated in the workshops. The program resulted in a report summarizing the team's findings (<https://failforward.centreforpublicimpact.org/p/1>) and the development of the CPI-NACA (National Association of County Administrators) Fail Forward Program.

The NACA-CPI Fail Forward Program is a year-long initiative in which a cohort of 5-7 counties will participate in a series of quarterly workshops and executive masterclasses geared towards creating an organizational culture that promotes innovation, responsible risk taking and experimentation, and learning from failure. Teton County submitted an initial application for consideration and has preliminarily been chosen as a participating county.

The Board of County Commissioners' Administrator worked with Department Directors to identify the three Departments that would participate on behalf of Teton County, which are Parks and Recreation, Public Works, and the Health Department. Quarterly Department Workshops will bring together department staff at all levels of seniority. In each workshop, department teams will diagnose internal challenges to failing forward, and develop action plans to break down those barriers. Between each workshop, as the teams seek to implement these action plans, CPI will offer hands-on support during monthly check-ins with staff. The participating Departments will join a cohort of diverse counties that will have the opportunity to engage and learn from each other over the course of a year.

CPI notes from their earlier work that culture change must start at the leadership level. As such, the BCC Administrator and Department Directors will participate in quarterly executive masterclasses, in which they will learn from renowned guest speakers with topical expertise in innovation and learning from failure and have the opportunity to engage with peers in other counties.

CPI notes that by the end of the program participating counties can expect to see a growing organizational culture of innovation that allows departments to better identify and solve problems within government and for the residents they serve.

Fiscal Impact:

The cost to participate in the program is \$50,000. This is an unbudgeted expense for FY21 and thus requires BCC approval and a future budget amendment.



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Staff Impact:

Participating Departments will involve up to 10 staff members in two half-day workshops per quarter over the course of the year-long program, which is anticipated to commence in July 2021. Additionally, County leadership will participate in four, 2-hour masterclasses (one per quarter) over the course of the year-long program.

Legal Review:

Gingery

Staff Input / Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of the MOU.

Attachments:

Failing Forward in County Government - Teton County Enrollment Package (includes Memorandum of Understanding)

Suggested Motion:

I move to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between Teton County and the Centre for Public Impact for the Failing Forward in County Government Program and to approve the allocation of \$50,000.00 in additional FY21 funding for program costs.

Failing Forward in County Government

Teton County Enrollment Package

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Program Overview

Background

In early 2020, the Centre for Public Impact (CPI) partnered with the Aspen Institute Center for Urban Innovation to explore why it's so difficult to learn from failure in the public sector and what public servants can do about it. The bulk of our findings were informed by the six local governments, 20 departments, and over 150 public servants who participated in our workshops. The program resulted in a report summarizing the team's findings: [How to Fail \(Forward\): A Framework for Fostering Innovation in the Public Sector](#), and the development of the CPI-NACA Fail Forward Program.

Program Description

The NACA-CPI Fail Forward Program (the "Program") is a year-long initiative where a cohort of 5-7 counties will participate in a series of quarterly workshops and executive masterclasses geared towards creating an organizational culture that promotes innovation, responsible risk taking and experimentation, and learning from failure.

1. Quarterly Department Workshops

Each participating county will recruit up to three departments to participate in **quarterly workshops** that will bring together department staff at all levels of seniority. In each workshop, department teams will diagnose internal challenges to failing forward, and develop action plans to break down those barriers. Between each workshop, as the teams seek to implement these action plans, CPI will offer hands-on support during monthly check-ins with staff. The participating departments will form a cohort of diverse counties that will have the opportunity to engage and learn from each other over the course of a year.

2. Quarterly Executive Masterclasses

It's important to recognize that culture change **must** start at the leadership level. County executives and department directors can set the tone from the top and provide encouragement to team members to take the risks necessary to innovate. As such, county executives and department directors will be invited to participate in **quarterly executive masterclasses**, where they will learn from renowned guest speakers with topical expertise in innovation and learning from failure, and have the opportunity to engage with peers in other counties.

Expected Impact

By the end of the program, participating counties can expect to see a growing organizational culture of innovation that allows departments to better identify and solve problems within government and for the residents they serve. Cultures of innovation can result in:

- Improved ability to better identify/solve problems for residents
- Increased organizational agility and resilience
- Improved team cohesion
- Improved psychological safety leading to continuous learning mindset

Timeline & Next Steps

Party	Task	By
County	Fill out and Sign Enrollment Package <i>Note: completion of enrollment package will secure the County's spot in the program.</i>	04/30/2021
CPI	Send County a separate contract outlining terms of participation, including invoice for program fee	04/30/2021
County	Identify up to ten team members from each department (with a mix seniority) and please add them to this document .	05/14/2021
County	Sign and return contract to CPI and complete invoice	05/28/2021
CPI and County	CPI-NACA Fail Forward Program Start	July 2021

Participating County and Departments

County Name:	Teton County
Executive Sponsor Full Name & Title:	Natalia D. Macker, Chairwoman, Teton County Board of County Commissioners
Executive Sponsor Full Name & Title:	Alyssa Watkins, BCC Administrator
Executive Sponsor Email Address:	awatkins@tetoncountywy.gov
Executive Sponsor Phone Number:	(307) 733-8094
Department/Agency #1:	Teton County/Jackson Parks and Recreation
Director (or equivalent) Full Name & Title:	Steve Ashworth, Director of Parks and Recreation
Director (or equivalent) Email Address:	sashworth@tetoncountywy.gov
Director (or equivalent) Phone Number:	(307) 733-5056
Department/Agency #2:	Teton County Public Works
Director (or equivalent) Full Name & Title:	Heather Overholser, Director of Public Works
Director (or equivalent) Email Address:	hoverholser@tetoncountywy.gov
Director (or equivalent) Phone Number:	(307) 733-8580
Department/Agency #3:	Teton County Health Department
Director (or equivalent) Full Name & Title:	Jodie Pond, Director of Health
Director (or equivalent) Email Address:	jpond@tetoncountywy.gov
Director (or equivalent) Phone Number:	(307) 733-6401

Memorandum of Understanding

Teton County and CPI Government Innovation Team

Project Vision

Teton County and CPI's Government Innovation team aim to partner on the CPI-NACA project to shift the approach to failure and risk in counties across the nation and create a culture of innovation and psychological safety in local governments. By participating in this 12-month program, Teton County and CPI will help equip county leaders and staff at all levels with the mindsets and skills they need to build cultures that embrace failing forward.

Goals

Rooted in our [Failing Forward Framework](#), the ultimate goal of this program is to work closely with **both** executive-level county officials and individual county departments across all levels of seniority to foster government cultures that embrace learning from failure.

To deliver on this goal CPI's Government Innovation Team will:

- Develop and facilitate quarterly masterclasses for county executives and administrators, which will cover a range of critical topics to spark buy-in and provide tactical guidance on failing forward. Masterclasses will be conducted virtually and include interactive presentations by renowned guest speakers with topical expertise.
- Develop and facilitate quarterly workshops, known as failure foundries, which will bring staff together from participating departments, at all levels of seniority, to better diagnose and address internal challenges to failing forward. Each failure foundry will focus on one of the four elements of the Fail Forward framework (mindsets and beliefs, human relationships, systems and processes, and external ecosystems). CPI will conduct pre-interviews with participating staff to ensure that each workshop is tailored to the department's needs and experiences. Between each foundry, CPI will offer hands-on support during monthly check-ins with staff.

Alongside these efforts, Teton County will:

- Invite department and agency leaders from across the County to participate in the executive masterclasses. Please note that attendees do not need to be limited to only leaders from participating departments, any leader from across the county government is eligible to participate. However, participants should be limited to county executives (manager, administrator) and department / agency heads.
- Select three departments to participate in quarterly failure foundries.
 - During failure foundries, departmental teams will learn about each element, spend time considering how this element enables or inhibits failing forward in their experience, and then

develop action plans to address the challenges they've identified. Department / agency directors are required to attend all workshops.

- In subsequent foundries, participants would evaluate the efficacy of each action plan and develop approaches for modification.
 - In the final months of the program, participants will create a strategic plan for developing a department-wide fail forward culture, informed by what succeeded and what failed from the action plans.
- Complete payment of \$50,000 prior to program start in July 2021.

We the undersigned acknowledge the goals and activities stated above:

Name: Josh Sorin

Organization: Centre for Public Impact

Title:

Date:

Signature:

Name: Natalia D. Macker

Organization: Teton County / BCC

Title: Chairwoman

Date: 5/4/2021

Signature:

Name: Alyssa Watkins

Organization: Teton County / Admin

Title: BCC Administrator

Date: 5/4/2021

Signature:

Name: Steve Ashworth

Organization: Teton County / Parks & Rec

Title: Director of Parks & Recreation

Date: 5/4/2021

Signature:

Name: Jodie Pond

Organization: Teton County / Health Dept

Title: Director of Health

Date: 5/4/2021

Signature:

Name: Heather Overholser

Organization: Teton County / Public Works

Title: Director of Public Works

Date: 5/4/2021

Signature: