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HELPING CANADA WORK BETTER
AIDER LE CANADA A MIEUX TRAVAILLER

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April 11, 2007	

Regional Municipality of York
York Region Transit
50 High tech Road
Richmond Hill
Ontario
L4B 4N7

Att: Blair Vandette

Dear Mr. Vandette,

Thank you for the submission from York Region Transit for NQI Progressive Excellence Program (NQI-PEP) Level One Certification. Following review we are pleased to inform you that it has met the intent of NQI-PEP Level One criterion.

The levels of NQI-PEP are progressive in scope, designed so that organizations can be externally recognized at different levels, thereby reinforcing and assisting in sustaining a focus on quality and continuous improvement.

Measures of NQI-PEP Level One performance include:

- Clarity and communication of vision/mission
- Clarity around the definition of client groups
- Plan for staff training on principles/practices reflected in NQI Criteria

Commendable actions outlined in the submission, notably:

- Mission/Values statements and Strategic Planning Guide
- Client definition and orientation on customer service core competency
- Commitment to quality methods/practices. (Comment: for moving forward it will assist to develop a plan to communicate NQI Criteria intent to all staff in a reasonable manner, notably on Level Two criteria prior to more comprehensive self-assessment activity)

For information purposes, we have attached a listing of effective practices noted from successful NQI-PEP Level Two and Level Three applications. This generic listing is not prescriptive, but rather a listing of practices that may assist in the generation of ideas.

An NQI-PEP certificate will be prepared (our contact on this is Bonita Savard, extension 233). We would be pleased to be involved in helping you celebrate this milestone, for example a scheduled visit by an NQI representative to present the certificate. Please extend our congratulations to the team at York Region Transit on this achievement, external validation of their excellence journey.

Sincerely,


John Perry
Senior Advisor & Vice-President

Cc: Bonita Savard (NQI)

Effective Practices in High Performing Organizations

The following practices are derived from NQI PEP applications and on-site verification activity. The approaches/practices noted are examples of high performing organizations, notably at NQI-PEP Levels Two and Three.

Leadership

- Documented business plan incorporating measurable objectives is in place. The plan (plans) have been distributed and communicated to all functions, along with measured objectives.
- There is a clear strategic linkage of overall issues and improvement objectives within the business plan to the direction of the organization, notably in meeting the needs of the client base.
- Leadership provides clear reinforcement and direction to all levels in ensuring that process improvement actions (notably under cover of Process Management) are linked to the key issues for improvement outlined within the business/operational plan.
- Leadership has a good grasp on the intent of the NQI Framework and intent of Levels Two-Three of NQI-PEP.
- The senior management team uses the "tools" for process improvement activity within its own tasks and reinforces the use of such actions with direct reports.
- Direct reinforcement of the quality framework (and the focus on improvement), and the vision/mission of the organization to all levels through direct discussions (scheduled sessions). Also including review of objectives, reinforcement of linkages to direction, (feedback requested, normally in question and answer part of the session).
- Teams are recognized for achievements in meeting/exceeding improvement goals, notably on key processes.
- Attendance by senior management at staff recognition events.
- Positive feedback is received from all levels in regard to a "constancy of purpose" on continuous improvement.
- Senior management team evaluates its approach to sustaining the quality focus and promulgating Level Two-Three actions that are discussed/reviewed at annual retreat/meetings, etc.

Planning

- There is a method in place to gather and consolidate information on improvement initiatives, notably those that link to key improvement issues within the business/operational plan. Strategic linkage is evident in organizations that achieve and sustain good long-term results from improvement actions (reductions in rework and higher levels of client satisfaction).
- There is a clear understanding by people at all levels of the connections between strategic direction/business plans/improvement goals/process improvement actions.

- Improvement goals have measurable outcomes and are tracked for progress to agreed timelines.
- Feedback from reviews form part of annual business planning system. This review of current state (in the context of a quality journey) is helpful input to the development of objectives, and serves as a good platform to ensure strategic linkage is maintained.

Customer/Client Focus

- There is clear understanding/appreciation throughout the organization of who the key customers/clients are.
- The organization uses techniques (to gain insight/information/feedback) such as focus groups, front-line reporting mechanisms etc, to assists customer/client needs analysis.
- Processes are in place to disseminate customer/client input, from all sources, to those in the organization that are able to take action. For example client survey data, measurements from client encounter points, complaints received (logged); all such data is stratified and available across the organization to those who can act on it.
- There are reviews addressing adequacy and accuracy of customer/client data (data collection methods), effectiveness of client survey formats and other customer/client contact methods, response rates from current/potential customers etc.
- Measures are in place which indicate the levels of performance in dealing with customer complaints including: time to respond to inquiries and complaints, time to provide requested information or resolve complaints to the customer's satisfaction and numbers of inquiries/complaints received and resolved.
- The organization provides confidence building information to external customers/clients, such as performance against service standards, product reliability data and documented improvements.
- Dialogue between functions on meeting external client needs is encouraged and practiced, benefiting alignment on the importance of meeting client needs.

People Focus

- The HR plan includes elements that address capabilities needed to achieve improvement goals (for example, training gap identification and resolution).
- Conduct scheduled review of outcomes to identify underlying reasons for goals/targets in the HR plan not being attained and identification of aspects of the HR planning process itself requiring improvement (for example information/data/input/time for planning).
- Human resource policy/procedures are well documented, and available across the organization.
- Performance reviews have a focus on the system people work in, not purely focused on individual goals.
- If quality improvement steering committee in place, this is clearly identified in the organization chart. In large organizations a steering committee is often in place to help direct improvement efforts (for example review ideas/suggestions and focus on improvement initiatives). Senior management team often takes on this role (steering the quality focus) as part of their leadership mandate.
- Procedures are in place covering improvement project initiation team formation and resource allocations. This approach assists in keeping the

right focus on improvement (key process improvement actions), notably for large or multi-location service sector organizations.

- People are encouraged to put their ideas forward, with timely review, and acceptance of ideas is linked to appropriate recognition for successful outcomes (notably "team" recognition).
- The management of employee wellness and well-being in the workplace is an integral part of the fabric of how the organization is managed. Application of employee wellness and well-being system (for assistance see NQI Criteria: Canadian Healthy Workplace Criteria and NQI - Healthy Workplace PEP implementation Criteria).
- Consideration of relevant issues identified from employee opinion/satisfaction surveys are linked to the improvement planning process.
- Employee recognition associated with contributions to specific outcomes targeted in the improvement plan.

Process Management

- On design of new services/products there is involvement by all areas at the planning stage to ensure strong dialogue during the planning process.
- Preventative approach is taken to the design of processes (for new or improved services/products) with consideration of potential non-conformances.
- For each key process there is clarity around what is to be measured, how is it to be measured, and at what stage.
- All process measurement decision criteria (pass/fail, good/bad, and accept/reject) are identified with clear information on appropriate actions.
- There is a standardized and disciplined approach to problem identification and improvement actions (techniques), data collection and analysis, root cause identification and validation of corrective action(s).
- The use of a standard set of process improvement techniques is in place, understood and used across the organization.
- Comparative process performance data exists from external sources, i.e., review of effective practices.

Supplier/Partner Focus

- Clear definition of services required from supplier/partner base, e.g., procurement specifications.
- Technical and/or management assistance is provided to key suppliers.
- There is involvement of key suppliers/partners in improvement planning.
- There is key supplier involvement in strategic and improvement planning, new service/product development, corrective and preventative actions.
- Partnership approach with key suppliers has led to the discontinuance of many incoming inspection activities (for example, simplified on-line invoicing and payment processes).