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THE ROSARIO HABITAT PROGRAM EXPERIENCE
PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPLIED TO GOVERNMENT*Part 3 of 3*

By **Ana Maria Rodriguez**, MSE, PMP
International Correspondent for PMForum & PM World Today
Rosario, Argentina
and
Architect Adriana Salomón
Rosario Hábitat Program Coordinator
Rosario Municipality, Rosario, Argentina

This article continues to document the experience of the Rosario Habitat Program (RHP), developed since 2000 by the Public Housing Service¹ of the City of Rosario (Argentina), in which many Project Management practices have been implemented since its inception. In the previous editions of *PM World Today* we presented the background to the Rosario Habitat Program,² the application of the conceptual framework of Project Management and the analysis of Integration Management, Scope Management, Time Management, and Cost Management³. In this paper we examine specifically the application of the concepts of Quality, Human Resources, Communications, Risk and Procurement Management in the Rosario Habitat Program. We will also conclude about the experience of Project Management in Government Programs.

Quality Management

The Rosario Habitat Program has made a continuous effort in quality management. During the inception of the program we worked on defining objectively verifiable indicators of the program quality, these are a vital element of the Logical Framework Matrix⁴ methodology that structures the program. Once the indicators were defined, quality assurance was implemented through a monitoring system. The system verifies that each of the tasks involved in each project meets the expected levels of satisfaction. Since the Rosario Habitat Program primary beneficiaries are the inhabitants of informal settlements, the system gives special importance to systematically collect their views on the quality of the actions that are being implemented.

In cases of low satisfaction results, the impact on each project goals are reviewed leading to adjustments. As the program is constituted by a large amount of actions that generate major

¹ Servicio Público de la Vivienda, Municipalidad de Rosario

² http://www.pmworldtoday.net/case_studies/2009/nov/CS-RosarioHabitat-ENG.html

³ <http://www.pmforum.org/library/cases/2009/PDFs/dec/CS-RosarioHabitatpart2-SPAN.pdf>

⁴ <http://nzaidtools.nzaid.govt.nz/logical-framework-approach>

deliverables, quality is monitored on all these actions as a way to avoid deliverables that do not meet expected quality levels.

Once each project is finished a final assessment is conducted, where objective compliance is reviewed. This evaluation verifies that the actions produced the components or deliverables specified in project definition, complying with the indicators as originally intended.

Human Resources Management

The management of these types of government projects requires an interdisciplinary approach. To accomplish this, the following actions are performed:

- Human Resource Recruitment was modified. Professional degrees were no more the basis for role assignment. Profile requirements were redefined, focusing on previous experiences and learning ability and flexibility. Recruitment has been in most cases through application processes.
- The traditional form of public work where there is a priority on compliance of schedule was changed by a goal-oriented work.
- An internal training program was implemented, based on the need for specific skills according to the specialty and role. Internships on similar programs in Latin America were done; internal teams also learned by joining other projects on a learning experience. Special training was offered for all who entered the program.
- In all cases, achieving the project objectives has been defined its primary goal of everyone's job, motivating the team work for this purpose.
- Team work was strengthened as the primary space for solving problems and searching for alternatives to the implementation of projects.

To achieve all these issues the figure of the Project Managers was strengthened as leader of a team with autonomy to solve problems and motivate his/her team according to his criteria. This included training in leadership and communications but also continued support from the Program Coordinator. Sharing successful experiences between teams has become also an important part of Human Resource Management.

Communication Management

A communication plan was developed at the beginning of the program in order to define the communication strategy with all stakeholders involved in projects and with all citizens, including progress and results of the Program.

In order to maintain a clear communication of the program actions the Rosario Habitat Program identity was defined, promoting a shared vision of the desired identity and image for each project, in particular, and the overall program, generating an institutional synergy targeted for this purpose by incorporating the perspective of different actors.

The communication strategy was planned then, including common core elements, and also differentiated actions for each specific audience. In the management of communications the Rosario Habitat Program addresses each stakeholder with a specific strategy. Such is the case

of the inhabitants of the settlements in which the program is working, residents of nearby settlements and all the population of the city of Rosario.

Required instruments were designed to keep the community informed on an ongoing basis on the progress of projects, other appropriate communication channels with internal and external actors were also defined in order to achieve the maximum possible correlation between the objectives of the Rosario Habitat program and their expectations.

In the communication management of the program, a constant communication has been maintained particularly at conflict times. It is clear that maintaining a high level of communication on the action taken reduces the level of uncertainty and increases confidence in the work of the Program. The maxim of this strategy has been "at a higher level of conflict, the greater level of communication must be achieved".

Risk Management

The first risk identification is included in the assumptions for the completion of the program objectives that are specified in the Logical Framework Matrix.

Given the dynamics of the processes of intervention in these projects, risks identification is reviewed on an ongoing basis during the planning and executing stages; when these assumptions can change and the reality of each settlement demonstrates new challenges to consider.

Risk analysis meetings are then frequently held, where the real challenge is to ensure opportunities for reflection and self-criticism beyond mere catharsis, achieving a real exchange and systematization of learning. In this regard the following analysis meetings have been used:

- Plenary where members of project teams participate, depending on the topic. They address different issues by reviewing the performance so far, identifying risks and agreeing new arrangements for the future.
- Exhibition of experience. When a project has done some innovative practice minimizing risks previously identified, the team documents the process and exposes it to the rest of the teams.
- Procedures Manual. The manual is updated regularly including actual mechanisms of work. It reformulates the sequence of actions for the formulation and implementation of projects of the Program.

Among the identified risks that are managed during the execution of projects are:

- Difficulties in availability of developable land.
- Difficulty in obtaining feasibility of providing water, gas, electricity services to future neighbours.
- High mobility of the target population.
- Low levels of execution by construction contractors
- Delays in execution times.

Early identification of risks and regular monitoring of the effectiveness of the measures envisaged to prevent adverse effects have allowed the projects to run properly even with the difficulties related to the complexity of work in irregular settlements. All management meetings referred to in Part 1 of this series of articles have been a living space for this analysis because they are performed regularly and allow raising and evaluating alternatives. In risk management a proactive participation of the teams has been a key element, with a strong commitment to achieving successful results in the projects.

Procurement Management

Procurement management at the Rosario Habitat Program is clearly defined in the Loan Agreement between the Government of Argentina and the Inter American Development Bank.

In this sense, there are rules required both for the case of works contracts, procurement, contracting of individual consultants and consulting firms. According to the budgeted amount, purchases of goods and services are made through international bidding processes, national competitive bidding, price competition or direct purchase. The recruitment of consultants is done through competitive examinations and the recruitment of consulting firms through background evaluation and work proposal.

A procurement plan is developed annually; it identifies the major purchases and contracts to be performed and discusses the strategy for achieving the desired objectives in these processes.

Procurement management is audited by relevant agencies: The Court of Accounts of the City of Rosario, the IADB and also an independent auditing firm audit the financial statements and annual financial statements of the program.

One key issue that has gained special importance is the time of procurement processes. Since the major actions of the program require major tender processes, the bid process was standardized and a particular time control is done to each required step. In this way, delays that may cause problems in implementing the program are not only identified early, but also new strategies to reduce delays in procurement while fulfilling the legal concerns are planned.

Conclusions

Applying Project Management practices in the Rosario Habitat Program allows general conclusions about government projects:

- The concepts and tools of Project Management are applicable to projects of Government
- Government projects that use these concepts and tools perform better and generate greater benefits for citizens
- Governmental bodies are obliged to implement tools that increase the transparency of the projects implemented
- Considering the recipient of the project as a main subject is vital for best results
- Governmental entities can generate rules that encourage the use of these concepts and that are replicated in other areas of society

- Government projects are the best place for project managers to use their knowledge for the benefit of society, improving their work life status of thousands of citizens

Images of the Rosario Habitat Program:



Children inhabitants of the settlement "La Lagunita" celebrating the inauguration of a new playground

About the authors:**Ana Maria Rodriguez***Author*

Ms. Ana Maria Rodriguez is founder and manager of ERA Project Management, offering consulting services to the Engineering and Construction Industry in Rosario, Argentina, and is an adjunct professor of project management at the Universidad Nacional de Rosario. Colombian by birth, Ms. Rodriguez graduated with a Civil Engineering Degree from Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogota and from the University of Texas at Austin, USA with a Masters Degree in Construction Engineering and Project Management (MSE). Ms Rodriguez has implemented Project Management best practices and managed projects both in the government sector and in the engineering and construction private sector. Ms. Rodriguez is also an active member of PMI in Argentina, and is an international correspondent for PMForum and PM World Today in Argentina. Additional information about Ms. Rodriguez can be found at <http://www.pmforum.org/pm%20forum%20team/index.htm>. Ms. Rodriguez welcomes contact at arodriguezdev@gmail.com also at www.erapm.com.ar .

About the Authors (continued)**Adriana Salomón***Rosario Habitat Program General Coordinator**Author*

Adriana Solomón is an architect, graduated from the Universidad Nacional de Rosario. She has served as General Coordinator for the Rosario Habitat Program, managing the simultaneous implementation of several projects. Ms. Salomón is Partner and Manager of Prohábitat XXI, providing consulting services design, management and evaluation of projects at various state agencies, civil society organizations and private companies since 1996. She was Director of Land and Housing of the City of Zarate. Adriana has extensive experience in coordinating interdisciplinary teams, management and evaluation of social projects, also in the creation of facilitation spaces between different actors in public policy. She has led institutional change processes and development of social programs management tools. Additional information can be found in www.prohabitat.com.ar. Adriana Solomon can be reached at adrianasalomon@gmail.com