



STRATEGIC
PROGRAMS, INC.

Actionable Data.
Innovative Solutions.
Measurable Results.

CASE STUDY

Auraria Higher Education Center

AHEC Employees Re-engaged Through Alignment

Situation

The Executive Vice President for Administration (EVPA) of the Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) wanted to improve accountability among in this public sector organization. State performance evaluation forms were inadequate, and there was resentment that Senior Managers were exempt from State-required evaluations. The EVPA decided to implement an Organizational Assessment with questions about performance evaluations, morale, trust for management, and internal politics. Of the 396 employees, approximately 50 spoke no English, and some were illiterate. Low participation was anticipated.

Strategic Solution

The EVPA contracted with Strategic Programs to conduct the Organizational Assessment to start bottom-up communication, promising employees that the complete report would be available to them, with recommended interventions from Strategic Programs. The research process was as follows:

- Our consultants worked with AHEC's project team to customize the survey.
- AHEC provided an internal resource to translate the survey into the Spanish dialect of the employee population.
- Data was collected with 92% participation, and processed.
- A detailed report and bilingual analysis was presented organization-wide; including nine Department reports with recommendations – *in less than one month*.

One recommendation was for a uniform, credible, accurate system of performance evaluation with professional development plans organization-wide. AHEC responded quickly and Strategic Programs began customizing a Senior Manager 360 for individuals at the upper levels of the organization. It was introduced *not for performance evaluation, but for professional development*. This reduced anxiety around the 360 process, and partnered individuals with AHEC to outline Professional Development Plans. Next, Strategic Programs developed a non-supervisor, bilingual 360 and expanded the process through the organization.

Results

Four days after the organizational report was presented, Department Task Forces were charged with aligning their goals with the organization's Mission and Strategic Plan. Employees were empowered to address issues that surfaced in the Organizational Assessment. They were advised that with empowerment comes accountability, and that results would be measured in a follow-up assessment in ten months.

High employee participation in the baseline assessment and the EVP's response resulted in improved morale that reduced absenteeism; cut through intra-office politics; and caused some supervisors who had previously stifled communication, intimidated their direct reports, and were otherwise negative centers of influence, *to resign*. Productivity visibly improved, despite an increased workload in some areas; and use of annual and sick leave were down.

A previously mature, static organization began to generate pride and positive energy. Positive centers of influence in the Department Task Forces supported management's intervention with the attitude, "buy in or bye-bye."