
Action Project

Institution: Madison Area Technical College
Submitted: 2006-08-09 **Contact:** Becky Baumbach
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Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 08-22-2006

Target completion date: 07-30-2007

Actual completion date: --

A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:

Integrated Reporting System (IRS) Project

B. Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

Data and measures for assessment purposes will be in an easily accessible format. A set of common measures will be established with known standards of performance. The IRS project will have the following objectives: 1) provide a mechanism that will allow the College to identify opportunities and make improvements where needed; 2) provide an easily accessible and understandable data reporting system that provides useful, relevant and timely data to each employee of the College; 3) provide a common set of data with known standards of performance.

C. Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Primary Category: Measuring Effectiveness

D. Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities:

The College recognizes that there is a disconnect between the current processes and systems and the people they serve. At the AQIP Strategy Forum (Feb. 2006) the AQIP Steering Team realized that there had to be a multi-pronged effort in order to address the disconnect in an effective manner. The AQIP Steering Team made the determination through the use of several different continuous improvement exercises that an umbrella system of measures and reporting might have the desired effect.

E. List the organizational areas -- institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

Employees, students key collaborative partners, advisory group members, employers, legislators, WTCS, Southwest Consortium members, accrediting agencies.

F. Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

Ideally, every unit and every process within the College will be impacted and improved.

G. Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):

A great deal of information and data is already available through the institutional research office. It will be the task of the action project team to create a system that would allow employees to access the data they need in a timely manner. The time period given should allow the action project team to complete the objectives, pilot the system, analyze the initial results and revise the system as a final product.

H. Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

By the end of the 2006-07 fiscal year fall semester, an overview of the data needs of various units throughout the College will be completed; by the end of the 2006-07 fiscal year, data will be available to College personnel in the areas of student records, FTE data and courses and classes; by the end of the 2006-07 fiscal year, the College will have a common data set and associated minimum standards of performance; by the end of the 2006-07 fiscal year, each unit will demonstrate use of the data available through completion of the unit plan.

I. Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

The project will be complete when the current data needs of the College have been identified and are being successfully met, when data is consistently being used as a part of the decision-making process and the College has a common data set with associated standards of performance.

J. Other information (e.g., publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):

The College's current data processes foster a dependency upon Institutional Research and do not create a sense of ownership on the part of the user. The IRS Project would allow the users to select the most relevant and useful data in an easy-to-understand format. Data would be available in near real time form anywhere internet access is available.

K. Project Leader and contact person:

Contact Name: Scott J Beard, Director, Institutional Effectiveness
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Annual Update: 2007-09-13

A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

Meetings were scheduled every two weeks beginning in October, 2006. These meetings were in conjunction with the planning for and implementation of an upgraded software package that would permit the College to provide expanded data reports. Using information from an employee survey asking what types of information would they find useful that isn't currently available, the project team created and prioritized a matrix of potential data reports in relation to current data reports. This work was completed by the end of November 2006. Plans were then begun based on the implementation of the software upgrade. The team determined that it would not be possible to move forward with the project until the upgrade was complete. Due to complicating issues related to the software upgrade, the project which was envisioned to begin implementation (by creating specialized reports) in January 2007 has not started as of this date. The software upgrade has not been fully completed so the project was deemed to have ended in March 2007. Portions of the team did create a presentation for administrators and other data dependent positions called Data 101, which provided an overview of the data available and how it can be used in the decision-making process. This presentation has been provided five separate times to current and new employees and administrators. The Data 101 presentation may form the basis for any future projects that are related to the standardization and creation of data reports.

Review (10-01-07):

Although Madison Area Technical's (MAT) original timeline was delayed due to complications with the software upgrade, the team has been successful in moving forward with alternate plans so that the project is not stalled. This kind of flexibility and the ability to respond to changing circumstances, an AQIP quality principle, has provided you an opportunity to develop other processes for sharing data that can inform decision-making. The Data 101 presentation, delivered to key stakeholders, has been widely shared a number of times and supports AQIP Category 5 (Leading and Communicating). One of the drivers that led to the development of this action project was the recognition that much information was already available through the institutional research office, but the institution needed a system for employees to access the data they need in a timely manner. Therefore, MAT has taken an important step in accomplishing a goal of the action project, since the Data 101 presentation identifies the scope and location of extant data. Getting data "in front of" employees empowers them to make decisions that affect their work (another AQIP quality principle).

B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.

Information regarding the project was sent to each employee via the institution's e-mail and internal communication newsletter. It was also highlighted at the fall 2006 and spring 2007 employee in-service event. Employees who regularly utilize the information services of the college and all administrators were asked to complete a short survey that asked them to describe the types of data that they would like to use but isn't currently available. Expectations were high that the project would provide previously unavailable

information but interest decreased as time went on without any measurable results. After the decision to end the project employees were notified using the same venues used to promote the project. Although there wasn't a great deal of enthusiasm for this project from the general employee population, there was a general acknowledgement that this was a need of the college and resources and personnel were allocated to the project. The project was enthusiastically embraced by the Institutional Research and Technology Services departments, who made up the bulk of the project members. When it was clear that it would not be possible to carry out the project as planned in the proposed timeline, enthusiasm for the project declined. However, the underlying parts of the plan are still being revised and will be implemented in the near future. At that time a decision will be made whether the project will be revived or an expanded version of the Data 101 presentation can be created and presented in an online format.

Review (10-01-07):

It appears MAT has communicated the details of the original action project and the necessary revisions and reasons for modifications and/or withdrawal of the project. Using the survey responses already gathered, the team might develop a new plan that comes close to meeting employee needs, if not delivering all of the original "promises" or goals of the action project. Identifying smaller, incremental steps that lead to improvement in data accessibility would be one way to respond to the decline in enthusiasm for the project. Communicating to internal stakeholders that although the team can not accomplish all of the goals it can accomplish some of the project goals might reinvigorate some of the campus-wide interest in the project. In addition, if the College has not done so already, making clear the reasons why the software upgrade failed, and making explicit that the coordinated efforts of employee groups can still lead to success in this endeavor will help to minimize the level of frustration due to the lack of measurable results. Finally, measuring the benefits, the small successes, that result from the Data 101 presentations will further the AQIP principles of Valuing People (Category 4) and Leading and Communicating (AQIP Category 5).

C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

At the present time the project has been deemed "retired." This means that the resources associated with the project are being used elsewhere. However, due to the continuing need to provide data to college employees and the need to teach employees about the available data and how it can be used, the final disposition of this project is unclear. It may be more accurate to say that the project is dormant until the technical difficulties have been addressed. It is unlikely that this project, if revitalized, would start up any earlier than 2009 at the present time.

Review (10-01-07):

Because this project is being retired, the College might consider developing an alternate project that addresses the continuing need to provide data to college employees. It might be helpful to focus now on teaching employees about which data are available and how these data can be used. Then, once the organization's technology and software can provide an easily accessible and understandable data reporting system, the employees will be fully prepared to make optimal use of the system. In addition, MAT might explore whether the team can begin now to identify or develop "known standards of performance," which was another intended goal of the project.

D. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

The only effective practice that resulted from this Action Project was that it was able to piggyback onto another technology project. It made this project very efficient as many of the same people were involved in both projects. However, it also had the problem of having the success of the Action Project directly linked to a technological project that was outside of the scope of the project. It was this dependency that eventually led to the premature ending of this project.

Review (10-01-07):

The approach taken to launch this action project reveals MAT's use of collaborative internal relationships (AQIP Category 9) in order to support institutional operations (AQIP Category 6). Rather than engaging in "silo-thinking," the team capitalized on work groups and activities that were involved in similar

projects. While this particular effort did not achieve all of the intended goals, the College appears to be taking stock in what worked and what did not work, thereby ensuring organizational learning.

E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?

The only challenges related to this Action Project lie in the fact that the technology required for the project still has not been fully implemented at the College. At the beginning of the Action Project it was not possible to provide a timeline for the eventual completion of the software upgrade. Since that time, Technology Services has begun a project management system which utilizes project charters to define the project along with determining roles and responsibilities, create a timeline for each project, and milestones. These changes have allowed Technology Services to provide a reliable timeline for completion of the specific tasks, which means that future similar projects will not suffer from the current Action Project's problems.

Review (10-01-07):

Again, it appears MAT has revised or created new systems based on the organizational learning that resulted from the difficulties associated with upgrading the software to support this project. The new Technology Services protocol, though not the focus or aim of this action project, is another example of MAT analyzing its current processes, identifying areas of opportunity, and making changes for improvement (AQIP Category 5, Leading and Communicating). In other words, the organization is embracing a culture of continuous improvement, even in the face of continued challenges that can hamper or redirect progress in some action projects.

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?

Review (10-01-07):

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