

Project Management Policy and Standard Operating Procedures

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The South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is a state cabinet agency that supports and serves South Carolina's youthful offenders. DJJ is responsible for providing custodial care and rehabilitation services to youth who are incarcerated, as well as youth in the community who are on probation or parole, or in community placement. DJJ provides services and support at five secure facilities, 43 county offices and ten camps across the state of South Carolina. DJJ accepts nearly 15,000 youth referrals annually (Munsch, 2020).

The mission of South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is to “protect the public and reclaim juveniles through prevention, community services, education, and rehabilitative services in the least restrictive environment.” (Munsch, 2020). Executive Director, Freddie B. Pough, supports the mission while serving at the pleasure of the Governor Henry McMaster. Director Pough leads DJJ with an eight-person Executive Management Team and five Associate Deputies. DJJ employs nearly 1,500 individuals across the state (Munsch, 2020).

Problem Statement

There are multiple projects in various stages of completion within most Divisions and Offices at the Department of Juvenile Justice. A project produces a service, product or result. It is temporary with a beginning date and an end date. A project is unique in that it is not a routine program/operation, but instead processes designed to accomplish a goal. (Project Management Institute, 2017) While many projects are led by the Project Management team within Strategic Operations, there are multiple projects being led throughout the agency within most Divisions and Offices. It is unknown how many projects are currently in process agency-wide as this information is not presently documented by any one division or in any central clearinghouse. As

projects are not presently recorded in one central location and standard project tools are not shared cross divisionally, it is unknown if there are project redundancies or if cross divisional collaboration is being utilized to improve outcomes. The Agency presently does not have a policy or standard operating procedures to provide guidance and governance on how the Agency accepts, plans, executes, and monitors projects. As the process has not been developed, projects are moving forward outside of Strategic Operations and the Project Management department without approved standards, guidance, and monitoring in place. Projects are developed in the absence of a formal policy that would provide structure, support, and appropriate monitoring from the initiating stage through execution and completion. Developing a standard and following one protocol would ensure appropriate project planning, development, execution, tracking and monitoring both within Strategic Operations and Divisions and Offices throughout the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Enhancing services to improve long-term outcomes for system-involved youth and families is a key strategic objective of the agency (Flowers & McDaniels, 2019). Creating standards for project development and implementation will improve the project management process. This improvement will allow divisions and offices to operate and collaborate more effectively and efficiently. Developing standards will reduce redundancies and enhance the services provided to youth thereby supporting positive long-term outcomes.

Data Collection

Data was collected in an effort to uncover the number of projects presently in process in Strategic Operations as well as the six divisions and five offices within the Department of Juvenile Justice (Ordiorne, 2019). The data collected would be analyzed to determine if the

agency would benefit from the creation of a project policy and Standard Operational Procedures to provide guidance and governance on how DJJ accepts, plans, executes, documents/tracks, and monitors projects. Each member of the Executive Management Team and Associate Deputy Directors assigned an administrator or senior leader to collect information on projects currently in process in their respective divisions and offices (Ordiorne, 2019)¹. Administrators were instructed to consider projects with a definitive beginning and end date that produced a product, service, or met a goal. Administrators were asked to identify project management or tracking tools that were utilized during the project life cycle.

Senior leaders from ten of the twelve divisions and offices participated and met with the Project Manager to review project information for their respective divisions/offices.

Administrators identified projects, the staff person(s) assuming leadership roles on the projects, defined timelines when known, and indicated which tracking tools, if any, were being utilized.

To assist in the organization of the data collected, a project tracker was created in Microsoft Teams. This SharePoint tracker allowed the Project Manager to input the following data points: Project Name, Division/Office, Project Description, Project Leader, Anticipated Completion Date, Percentage Complete, Budget, Status, Updates, and Alerts. Alerts included icons depicting: Over Budget, Needs Reviewed, Youth-Impacting, and Multi-Divisional Collaboration Required.

This data tracker was created in Microsoft Teams to allow the Project Manager the ability to share information with Administrators and Deputies while allowing those leaders the opportunity to review and add updates to the projects submitted². This zero-cost data hub for projects also provides project transparency and facilitate immediate communication.

¹ See DJJ Agency Organizational Chart in Appendix

² See Project Tracker in Appendix

Divisions and Offices submitted 76 projects for review. Of those 76 projects, 63 were found to be unique projects. Ten projects required cross divisional support and were listed by multiple divisions/offices. Three projects were listed by Divisions as individual, independent projects, but upon further review, were determined to be the same project in three divisions operating independently, exposing a redundancy.

As expected, the largest number of projects, 29, originated from Project Management, Information and Security, and Information Technology departments within Strategic Operations (see Figure 1). The Office of Professional Standards reported nine projects. The Division of Rehabilitative Services reported seven projects. The Division of Community Services and Office of Institutional Programming each reported five projects. The Division of Education and Workforce Development reported four projects. The Division of Institutional Services reported two projects. The Office of Human Resources and Division of Investigative Services each reported one project. The Division of Legal Services reported zero open projects presently.

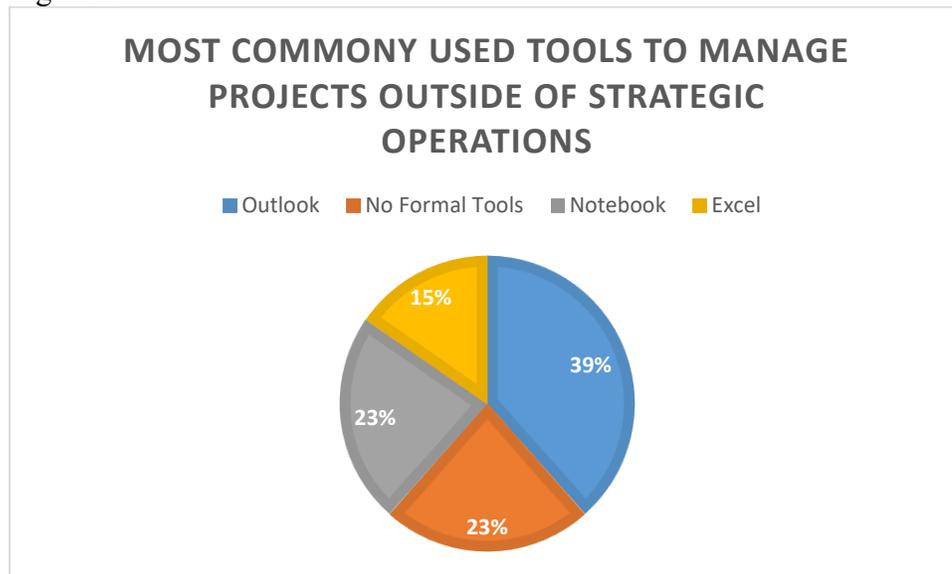
Figure 1



Strategic Operations reported utilizing Microsoft Project with Gantt Charts, Microsoft Teams, and a Microsoft Excel data hub designed specifically for project documentation, tracking,

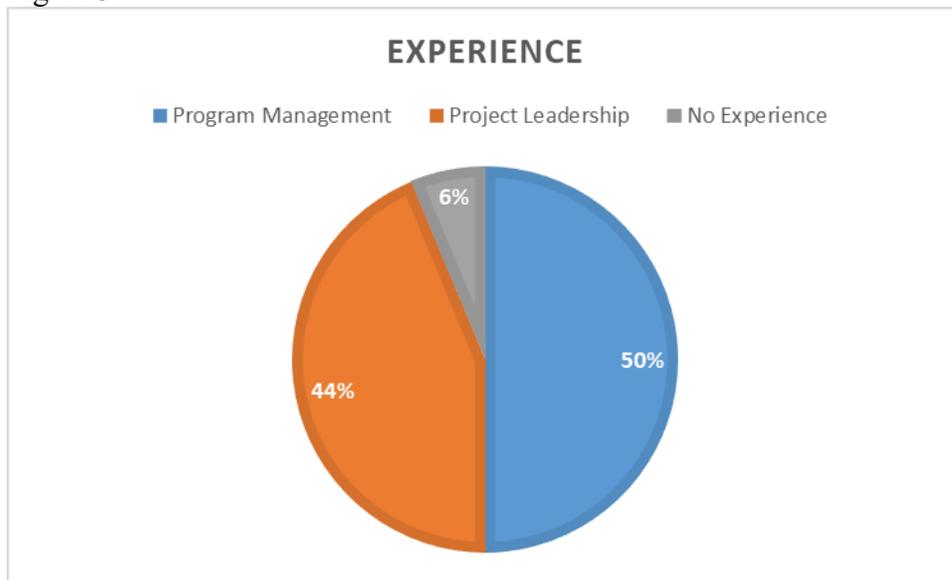
and sharing. Some Divisions noted that no formal project management tracking or reporting tools were routinely utilized. Of those who identified tools, the tools most frequently utilized included routine office organizational tools such as Microsoft Outlook calendars to track project meetings and schedule project work time, paper notebooks to document project movement, updates and to-do lists, and Microsoft Excel to keep data organized (Figure 2).

Figure 2



Respondents outside of Strategic Operations were unfamiliar with project management language and formal processes and were, therefore, unable to identify common project stages outside of planning and executing. This language and concept barrier made it difficult to categorize and catalogue projects correctly. Most misidentified the monitoring and controlling phase as project closure, for example. All respondents outside of the Strategic Operations Division indicated they had no formal training or certifications in project management. Most self-identified as program managers and/or experienced project leaders. Few respondents indicated they possessed leadership skills but did not identify specific program management or specific project leadership experience in state government (Figure 3).

Figure 3



Data Analysis

Strategic Operations houses the Information Technology, Information Security, and Project Management departments. Strategic Operations houses the highest concentration of employees with formal project management training, education, and experience. The largest, most complex projects identified as having the greatest agency-impact by the Executive Director are managed by Strategic Operations. The data collected indicated, when reviewing projects based solely by volume, the majority of projects are developed outside of Strategic Operations where leaders self-identify as program managers or project leaders and not project managers. Lack of formal project management education and experience is not an indicator of performance standards. This data is presented to highlight administrators are leading projects in the absence of standard operating procedures and policy that would provide oversight and guidance to support efforts to create quality projects.

Quality is the process required to ensure projects will satisfy the needs for which they were undertaken (McMahon & Lane, 2001). Creating policy and standard operating procedures to help define language and concepts such as project stages and scope will help program managers and project leaders prevent scope creep while more accurately defining project parameters. Consistent application of project management standard operating procedures is critical to consistently achieving successful quality outcomes.

The Department of Juvenile Justice's fourth agency strategic goal is to enhance Information Technology processes and agency applications for efficient operations. The lack of a centralized data and information hub for projects that could be utilized cross divisionally has led to effort duplication with multiple offices working on the same project independently. This is a drain on agency resources and impacts operational efficiency. Utilization of a Project Tracker like the one developed in Microsoft Teams, is a zero-cost solution that would eliminate redundancies and if used properly increase cross divisional communication and collaboration. Tools such as these made readily available to agency administrators would lead to an increase in efficiency, supporting the agency's stated strategic goal. By sharing tools such as the Project Tracker agency wide, Divisions and Offices will have the ability to share information cross divisionally effectively and efficiently through the utilization of one tool. The Project Tracker is user-friendly, requires minimal data entry, and includes a dashboard with easy to read alerts to highlight project milestones, budgetary information, cross divisional information, and requests for additional resources.

Implementation Plan

A Project Management Policy and subsequent Standard Operating Procedures would prove beneficial in providing guidance to Senior Leaders, Program Managers, and Project Leaders while establishing a standard for how the Department of Juvenile Justice accepts, plans, executes, and monitors projects. In order to ensure this process is inclusive and addresses the identified needs of the agency, the Project Management department should assemble a Project Management think thank group to include employees who typically lead projects in other divisions to share ideas and develop standards. This group will meet biweekly for six months to research and share best practices in project management, including those in other state agencies, in an effort to develop a policy to best meet the needs of the agency as a whole. This group will review commonly utilized project management tools, identify costs associated, and make recommendations for either commercially available project management tools, the sharing of tools presently available to the agency, or the development and creation of new tools by DJJ staff. Costs associated with off the shelf solutions, if recommended, would need to be explored further.

Potential obstacles for implementing a project management policy and standard operating procedures include identifying and obtaining buy in and securing the time commitment required from staff to participate in the policy development think tank group. This may be combatted through continued conversations highlighting the benefits and supports the policy would provide to their respective division/office. Increasing communication, facilitating successful cross divisional collaborations, reducing redundancies, and increasing efficiency will be cited as benefits. Scheduling can be a challenge as leaders are often committed to existing projects and programs and may not respond favorably to an additional meeting in an already full day.

Providing clear agendas, presenting concise information and leading productive sessions with clear goals will assist leaders in recognizing the value in the project which will lead to meeting prioritization. Locating resources, if deemed required by the think tank group, is another possible barrier to success. Exploring the tools and resources existing within the agency will assist with this barrier. Reviewing zero-cost solutions and exploring options that may be developed by DJJ staff may combat this potential barrier. Educating staff on the new policy and obtaining adherence, once developed, may pose an obstacle. Obtaining buy-in from leaders and subject matter experts during the think tank stage of policy creation will assist and provide a positive trickle-down effect. Leaders who see the value, were a part of the creation and are invested in the project will likely encourage staff to adhere to the policy.

There are a variety of potential resources to assist with policy and SOP creation. Leaders, key stakeholders, and subject matter experts will share their knowledge, experience and input during think tank sessions prior to policy creation. This will be invaluable in providing the foundation for both the policy and SOPs. Additionally, DJJ has a policy team and an SOP expert who have committed to providing support and guidance throughout the process. The newly created Microsoft Team Project will have the capacity to act as the data collection hub needed to track project data and encourage collaborative work.

Evaluation Method

To determine efficacy of the created policy and related SOP, comparisons may be made between the data collected prior to policy creation against data collected post policy creation. If the policy is meeting the stated goals, reviewers will find a reduction in project redundancy evidenced by a lack of multiple independent projects with the same goal occurring simultaneously. Reviewers will also note an increase in cross-divisional collaboration and

information sharing as evidenced by the use of created tools. An increase in cross divisional collaboration may also be evaluated by reviewing data in the hub to establish the same project has not been entered into the hub/tracking tool by multiple division/offices. Finally, staff may be surveyed to determine if the policy and subsequent supports created through the SOP have been beneficial in navigating project management.

Summary and Recommendations

There are multiple projects in various stages of completion within most Divisions and Offices at the Department of Juvenile Justice. While the largest projects with the greatest agency impact, as determined by the Executive Director, are led by teams within Strategic Operations, 52 % of all projects are managed by staff outside of Strategic Operations. Staff identified as leaders of projects outside of Strategic Operations do not self-identify as Project Managers with formal education or experience.

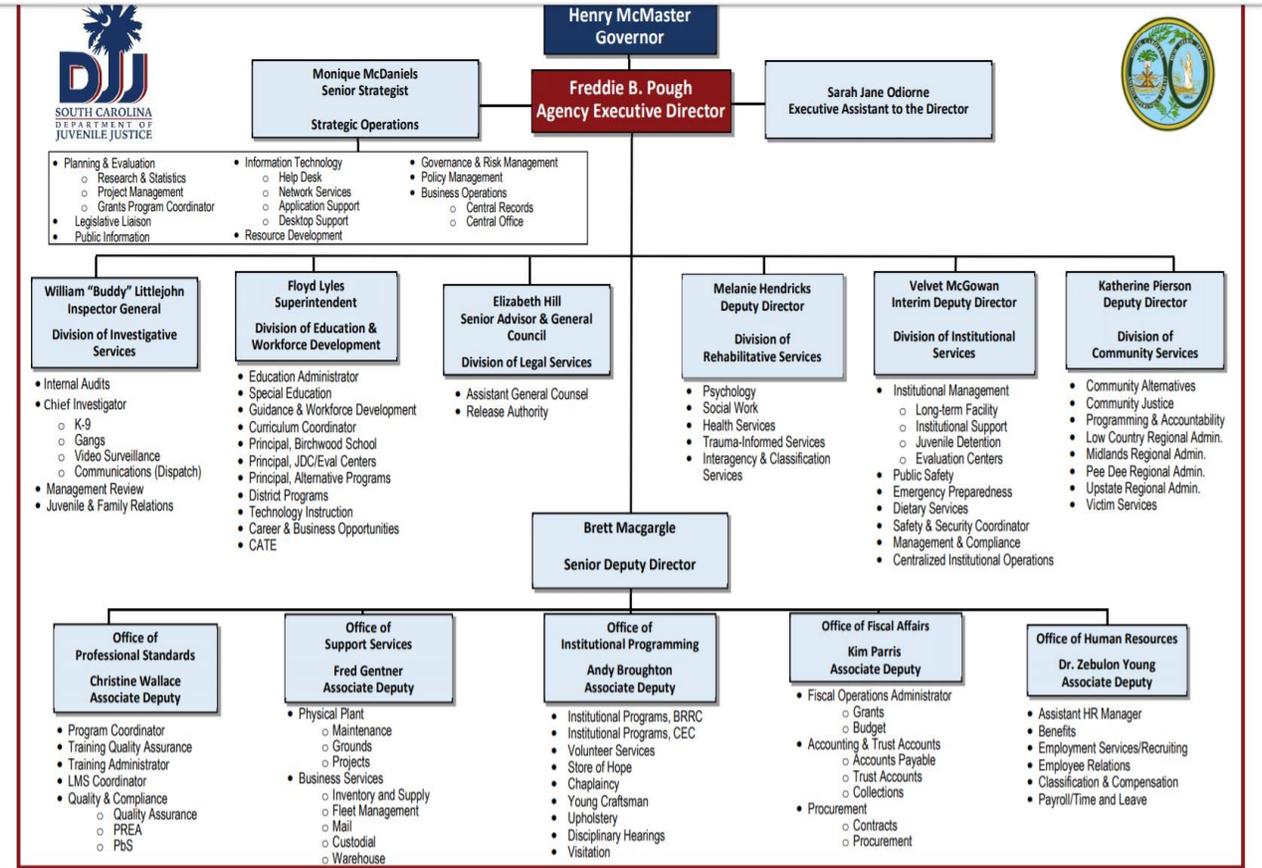
Presently the agency does not have a project management policy or standard operation procedures to provide structure, standards, guidance and governance to leaders who manage projects outside of Strategic Operations. The tools available to Strategic Operations project managers are not readily accessible to staff outside of Strategic Operations. The development of policies and procedures to help define how the Agency accepts, plans, executes, and monitors projects would prove beneficial. Developing a standard and following one protocol would ensure appropriate project planning, development, execution, tracking and monitoring both within Strategic Operations and Divisions and Offices throughout the Department of Juvenile Justice. In conclusion, the development of a project management policy, standards, and the sharing of project management tools will reduce project redundancies, increase efficiency and cross divisional collaboration while supporting the agency's strategic goals. Creating policy and

standard operating procedures to help define language and concepts such as project stages and scope will help program managers and project leaders prevent scope creep while more accurately defining project parameters.

References

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Footnotes/Appendix



2

Microsoft Teams

Search or type a command

Projects List

Project Name	Division	Project Description	Project Status	Project Stage	Alerts
Seven Habits on the Inside/Seven Habits fo...	Institutional Programming	Research, design, and implement an incentive-based "7 Habits" program for youth behind the fence.	Planning	Initiation	
Virtual Store of Hope	Institutional Programming	Develop, create, and launch an online store for the Store of Hope engaging and educating customers from across the country.	Planning	Initiation	
Expand Visitation Program	Institutional Programming	Review, revamp, and expand the present youth visitation program. Expand visits to include natural supports in the community beyond biological parents/legal guardians/immediate family.	On Schedule	Planning	
Parent Advisory Board/Council	Institutional	Create a Parent Advisory	Planning	Initiation	