

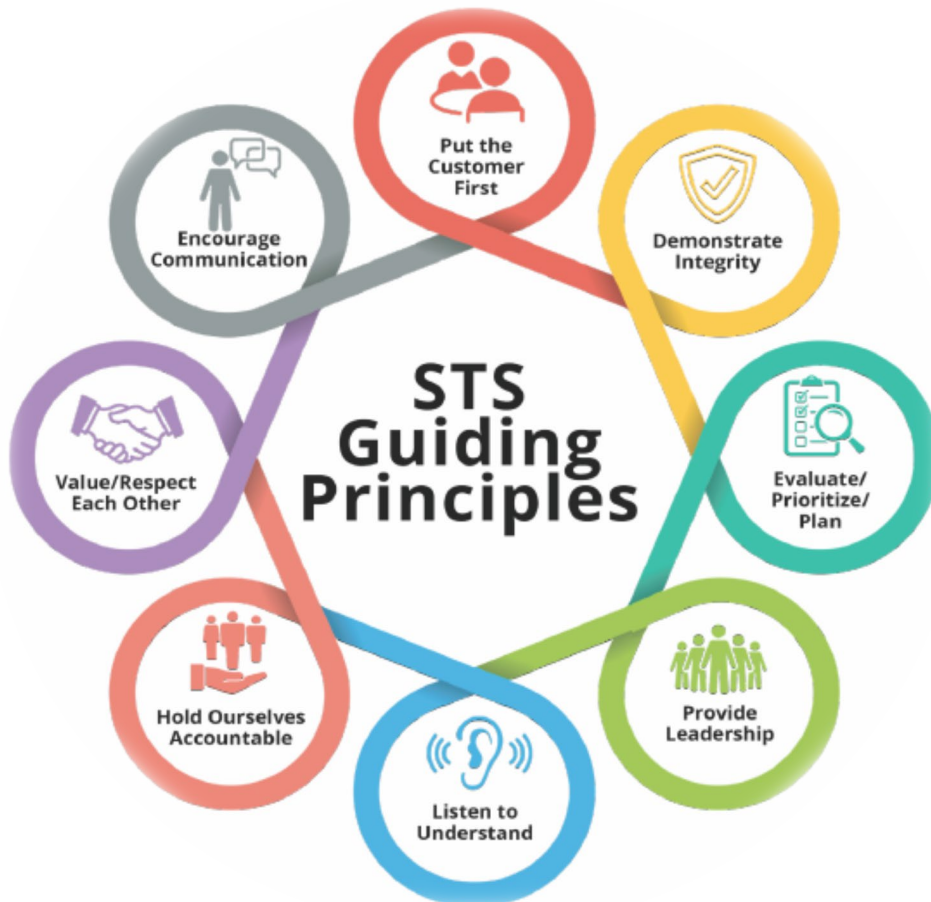
2020 NASCIO State IT Award Submission

State CIO Office - Special Recognition

The Best Recipe for Workforce Development & Guiding Principles, in A Melting-Pot Culture

Submitted on July 15th, on behalf of the State of Tennessee

by Strategic Technology Solutions, Department of Finance and Administration

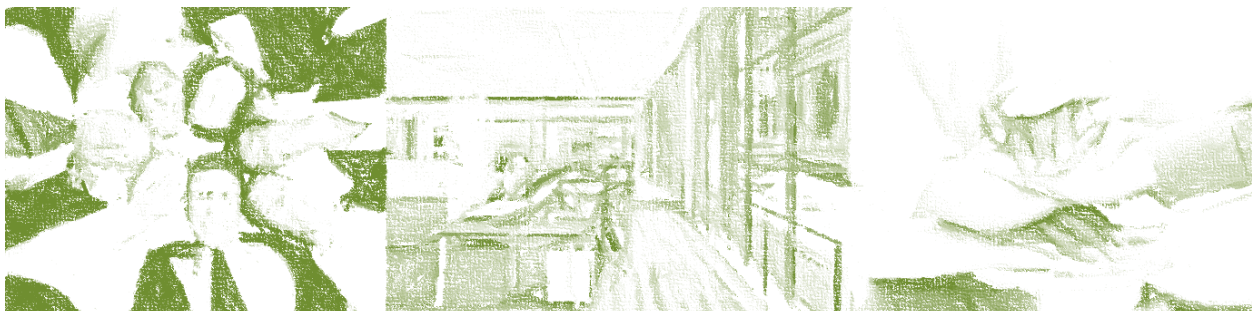


The State of Tennessee's enterprise IT staff consolidation project allowed the pooling of resources and accomplishment of more work with less people than was previously required across all Departments. The central IT organization, Strategic Technology Solutions (STS), grew from approximately 350 IT staff to over 1,300 in a short period of two and a half years. This centralized model has provided many benefits for the State, and also a few initial challenges due to the melting-pot of IT professionals brought together – particularly in the areas of organizational culture, professional values, and guiding principles. In 2019, the creation of the STS Guiding Principles served as one solution to these challenges.

The Background - In order to leverage statewide shared services and bring a customer-focused mindset to fruition, leadership within the State of Tennessee decided to make significant and meaningful changes to the state's IT organizational model. Increased pressure due to anticipated budget reductions, Departmental demands for more advanced solutions, and increasing competition for limited technology resources inspired the massive *Enterprise IT Transformation (EIT)* initiative across the State of Tennessee, that took place from 2015 to late 2018. The State CIO's Office responded to cost and resource challenges through the adoption of IT best practices and consolidation, standardization of methods and practices, resource pooling, outsourcing, and use of shared technology systems. This was achieved through transformation of state IT to a unified IT delivery model that upholds uniform processes, standardized methodologies, shared assets, and pooled resources under a single organizational structure and vision. With the completion of EIT, 20 Departments' IT staff had transferred to the STS organization.

The completed *EIT* project resulted in an advanced unified IT delivery model where the State's enterprise-wide IT organization provides all IT services, infrastructure, technical capabilities, staff, etc. The State of Tennessee employs approximately 38,000 staff to serve 6.72M citizens across 95 counties. Of those 38,000 employees, approximately 1,600 of them held IT positions. The use of shared resources allowed STS to best serve the state's large population, without hiring hundreds of new staff and duplicating costs and work efforts across the State. But this enormous organizational shift did not come without its own challenges.

As one can imagine, growing an organization from 350 IT staff to approximately 1,300 resulted in a melting-pot of many different professional cultures, values and work ethics. In 2019, the State CIO's office recognized work was required to rebrand STS, and unify its organizational culture and guiding principles.



The Planning – When an organization is as large as STS, consistency is vital. To ensure consistency in planning, all members of the STS Leadership Team were required to attend an off-site strategic retreat in early 2019. At this retreat, leaders discussed Governor Lee’s five priorities in detail, operational IT goals/objectives, and developed strategic goals. This work resulted in defining the collective set of eight strategic goals (figure 1.0) and the guiding principles that would be the catalyst for STS’s new culture.

Figure 1.0



Workforce Development was one of the 2019 STS Strategic Initiatives, and a subgroup was dedicating seeing the initiative to fruition - *STS Workforce Development Team*. The CIO's charge to the team was to implement new processes and procedures at STS that would attract and retain a viable IT workforce within the competitive IT industry, while also further developing a like-minded culture for a large customer-service organization.

Workforce development has always been a major goal for the public sector organizations that compete to recruit and retain top talent against their highly competitive private sector counterparts. This is particularly a challenge in the State's capitol city of Nashville, Tennessee. Nashville is a

technology job hub that in recent years boasted a 2.7% metropolitan unemployment rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). Knowing this, the *STS Workforce Development Team* set off to accomplish several lofty goals: a rebranded organizational culture, a professional certification recognition program; a standardized cross training program; and improved recruiting and retention practices that better utilize internships, fellowships, and college pipelines. The team understood that defining guiding principles would play a key role in superior employee performance in a fast-paced, customer-facing environment like information technology.

The Implementation - The *STS Workforce Development Team* completed several accomplishments that have allowed STS to better recruit and retain the future IT workforce in the State of Tennessee. The team's accomplishments included the development of the "secret sauce recipe" that has made our state's highly centralized organization so successful, the STS Guiding Principles, which are listed below along with demonstrative behavior examples (figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1

| STS Guiding Principles and Examples | |
|---|--|
| <p>1) Put the Customer First</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include customers in our discussions, process improvement initiatives and other working sessions • Return customer phone calls and emails within the same day; at least acknowledge receipt and commit to a date/time you will respond • If deadlines are going to be missed, proactively communicate with the customer, take responsibility, propose new date and ensure customer accepts proposed date <p>2) Listen to Understand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat back what you understand the listener is saying; "Let me make sure I understand..." • Listen without interruption, giving positive non-verbal cues • Encourage ideas and participation from all team members <p>3) Demonstrate Integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuse to participate in gossip or negative talk about co-workers • Be honest with your team or supervisors when you have made a mistake • Be respectful in your interactions with all co-workers <p>4) Hold Ourselves Accountable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide follow up with supervisors, team members and customers when delivering a service or deliverable • Take personal responsibility for your work; admit when a mistake is made or the ball got dropped • Do what you say you're going to do | <p>5) Evaluate/Prioritize/Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only promise what you can truly deliver • Plan for your work and that of your teams each week • Help your subordinates better plan their priorities and work <p>6) Encourage Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage your team members to provide feedback • Make a point to check in with all team members weekly • Take a leadership role in communicating with your peers, cross teams and with leadership <p>7) Provide Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give your time and attention to your team members • Be positive when speaking about STS, F&A, team members and our workforce • Recognize strong performance and delivery; say thank you and I appreciate you and your efforts <p>8) Value & Respect Each Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize strong performance and delivery; say thank you and I appreciate you and your efforts • Recognize and appreciate the contributions of each other; appreciate that we all bring different skills, experience and value to our work |

Partnering with the STS leadership Team and deciding upon the Guiding Principles was the relatively easy part -- but getting all STS embrace and demonstrate the principles in everyday practice was the next challenge. The team decided to leverage the state's existing Performance Management Program in this effort. The state's Performance Management Program is based on the Tennessee Excellence, Accountability, and Management Act that provides performance standards and expected work outcomes that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time sensitive (SMART goals). The purpose of the program is to nurture a performance-based culture where the individual employee's performance is aligned with the administration's objectives.

To this end and with approval from our Department's HR team, all STS employee's Individual Performance Plans were written in alignment with the eight 2019 STS strategic initiatives, including a work outcome statement (figure 1.2) that encouraged employees to both learn and uphold the STS Guiding Principles themselves by attending team workshops, and to also recognize instances where team members demonstrated them as well. This program has been crucial to employees embracing the customer-service culture throughout late 2018 - present day.

Figure 1.2

2019 STS Guiding Principle Work Outcome (Employees)

Work Outcome: At least three times a year, attend and actively participate in your team's STS Guiding Principle workshops.


Action Steps:

1. At least three times a year, attend a workshop with your team.
2. Participate in team building activities or morale boosters in each workshop and provide thoughtful input in ways to demonstrate our guiding principles.
3. On a consistent basis, recognize instances where team members are demonstrating a reinforcement of STS Guiding Principles and report on TeamTN where applicable:
<https://www.teamtn.gov/sts/sts-employee-engagement/employee-engagement/sts-guiding-principles.html>

The above 2019 work outcome statement required STS employees to attend at least three team-centered workshops on the STS Guiding Principles. The workshop course was created by the STS Workforce Development Team, in order to assure consistency across the entire organization, no matter which supervisor was hosting the workshop. The workshop outline is displayed in figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3

STS Guiding Principles



1. Value and Respect Each Other
2. Put the Customer First
3. Evaluate, Prioritize, and Plan
4. Hold Ourselves Accountable
5. Demonstrate Integrity
6. Encourage Communication
7. Provide Leadership
8. Listen to Understand

90 Minute Workshop Outline

- 1) **Intro** - Watch assigned intro video(s) with team (links attached on last page) (5-10min)
- 2) **Director/Manager** - Reviews the workshops' Guiding Principles and the demonstrated behaviors that map to those GPs (10 min)
- 3) **Breakouts** - Split into partners/groups of 3 and discuss how each GP applies specifically to your area/duties and challenges (10 min)
- 4) **Large Group** - Sharing/discussion of what was learned in breakouts and give examples of successes (15 min)
- 5) **Large Group** - Whiteboard and document 1-2 team goals that apply to each GPs discussed (turn these goals into CIO) (10 min)
- 6) **Team Building Activity** (come up with your own or use one of the examples provided) (15-20 min)

The work outcome statement also referenced a program that was developed by the STS *Workforce Development Team* to allow STS employees to provide peer feedback and recognition for coworkers who best demonstrated the new STS Guiding Principles. These nominations were made possible through an embedded Formstack Survey that was customized for STS (figure 1.4). Nominations received through this form go directly to the CIO’s office for review and consistent distribution (figure 1.5) via the STS internal TeamTN website (<https://www.teamtn.gov/sts/sts-employee-engagement/employee-engagement/sts-guiding-principles.html>).

Figure 1.4

Figure 1.5

| Date Submitted: | STS Employee Recognized: | Why does this person deserve nomination? How did she or he uphold the Guiding Principles? | Submitted By: |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--|---------------|
| December-19 | [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] took on the role of DevOps lead during a recently completed large project and during the entire effort demonstrated her ability to Evaluate, Prioritize, and Plan. This implementation of new Edison functionality took twists and turns and involved many moving parts. [REDACTED] stayed focused and organized throughout and led her team with professionalism. | [REDACTED] |
| December-19 | [REDACTED] | I'd like to nominate [REDACTED] (Planview Administration) for keeping the STS Guiding Principles #1 and #8 in mind while he was assisting me today with some Planview updates I needed to make. I was unsure how to make a particular update and he responded in a most respectful and understanding way that did not belittle me or insult my intelligence. [REDACTED] is so professional and my go-to specialist when I'm working with Planview. Thanks so much [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] |

Value and Respect Each Other - [REDACTED] took the time to comment

The Impact - The STS Guiding Principles program has been crucial in STS embracing a culture of customer service. While building and enhancing organizational culture is an ongoing endeavor, STS has realized improved customer service satisfaction scores improving from an average of 3.0 in 2018 to 4.06 in 2019 overall (on a 5 point scale). Additionally, Since January 2019 a total of 339 employees have been recognized for demonstrating behaviors associated with the STS Guiding principles. The Guiding Principles nomination page on TeamTN/STS has received over 1,850 unique visitors. These metrics suggest that STS employees have been empowered to recognize and upholding the Guiding Principles. This has resulted in increased employee satisfaction, as well as improved customer service

Additional Accomplishments - The Workforce Development team also achieved many other accomplishments from 2019-2020. Examples are:

- **Designed and Implemented an IT Certification Recognition Program**
 - o In November 2019 DOHR policy was changed to recognize many of the nationally recognized IT certifications. DOHR modified Policy 12-031, Nationally Recognized Professional Certifications, to include a number of information technology (IT) certifications. The policy took effect January 1, 2020. As a result, the state can recognize and compensate employees who have completed one of those programs, regardless of the department in which the employee works.
 - o Acquired approval to provide recognition, including a pay increase, for individuals who obtain any one of 19 pre-determined IT certifications. 6 employees who received a salary increase as a result of this IT Certifications Recognition Program being revised in January 2020, and an estimated 15-20 more will pursue an increase by the end of 2020

- **Redesigned and implemented an *STS New Hire Onboarding* program**

- **Increased participation in both local and regional career fairs**

- **Enhanced STS social media presence on LinkedIn, Facebook, & Twitter**



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/tn-dept-of-finance->