

# New administrative model of the municipality of Utajärvi

**Published On:** 10 June 2014

**Organisation:** Utajärvi Municipality

**Country:** Finland

**Level of government:** Local government

**Sector:** General public services

**Type:** Organisational Design

**Launched in:** 2012

**Overall development time:** 17 months

**Like this innovation**

0 persons like this innovation

# Description

---

The objective of the new proactive municipal strategy is to steer municipal decision-making, management and operations. The new integrated management system is used to both implement the strategy and assess its implementation. It includes descriptions of municipal service processes and operations, and the most essential service supply documentation. It is available to all municipal employees and elected representatives.

The new model organises the work of elected representatives in accordance with Deming's PDCA cycle (Plan, Do, Check, Act). Political matters are clearly separated from operational tasks allowing elected representatives to focus on essential issues. Therefore, officials will take more responsibility in clear-cut, non-political matters, such as taking and implementing operational decisions.

The work of elected representatives will be reorganised through a life-cycle model, preparatory committees, better assessment and use of feedback. There will be new decision-making tools, e.g. impact assessments. The preparatory committees' mandate is to prepare alternative proposals and comment on them. Elected representatives actively develop municipal strategy based on the feedback from earlier operations.

Residents participate more in preparatory work through things such as hearings. In addition, they can express their opinions through an electronic feedback system. Assessment results will be presented to residents and their views will be heard.

---

## Why the innovation was developed

There was a need for decision-making to be more efficient and to further develop Utajärvi's certified management system. There was also a need to involve residents more effectively in preparatory work and development of the municipality and assessment of work, thus increasing transparency. The new administrative model better responds to the changes and turbulence in the operating environment. Emphasis on customers/residents, improving the profitability and quality of services, and clarification of the management system were also drivers for innovation. People felt that 'the way things have always been done' was inadequate in the future and they wanted to explore new, courageous solutions. The objective is to change organisational and management structures along with the way elected representatives and municipality officials think and work.

---

## Objectives

Enhance public trust, Improve effectiveness, Increase citizen engagement

- Develop Utajärvi into a productive, innovative and barrier-free municipality.
  - Modernise the municipal strategy, the management system and the municipal administrative model.
  - Improve the quality of decision-making through impact assessment of decision.
  - Increase the relevant know-how of officials and personnel, and the efficient, high-quality implementation of decisions.
  - Ensure transparency and continuous development of the municipal organisation.
  - Improve operations on the basis of feedback through continuous assessment.
  - Improve communication of information through the description of municipal services in the management system.
  - Enhance the participation of residents through hearings and feedback system.
- 

## Main beneficiaries

Civil Society, Government bodies, Government staff

- 3 000 residents of Utajärvi who will be better informed and have more say in matters concerning them.
  - Municipality officials, as they can focus on making and implementing operational decisions and running the municipality.
  - Elected representatives, who can focus on leading the municipality into the future in an effective, sustainable way.
- 

## Existing similar practices

### Asiakkaan asialla – muutoshanke City of Järvenpää

In public administration of my country

Cities of Tampere, Kouvola, Jyväskylä, Kuopio and Järvenpää

They have developed municipal organisation models based on process management. The new administrative model of the municipality of Utajärvi is also based on the process-oriented approach to operations and the implementation of Deming's PDCA cycle.

[https://www.jarvenpaa.fi/--Asiakkaan\\_asialla\\_-muutoshanke--/sivu.tmpl?sivu\\_id=5672](https://www.jarvenpaa.fi/--Asiakkaan_asialla_-muutoshanke--/sivu.tmpl?sivu_id=5672)

---

# Results

---

## Efficiency

Decision-making has become more efficient, as political and operational matters are clearly defined and distributed between officials and elected representatives. The new administration model was evaluated in June 2013. According to the results of the evaluation, for example, the quality of preparatory work prior to decision-making has improved thanks to the new administrative model and the distribution of work, which allows elected representatives to focus on essential matters.

---

## Effectiveness

The innovation has changed the decision-making planning culture. It has also had positive impacts of the quality of decision-making planning.

---

## Service quality

### Accessibility:

The innovation has improved the residents' access to matters concerning their municipality. There are more opportunities for participation in the form of hearings and electronic customer satisfaction surveys.

### Responsiveness:

In order to ensure effective decision-making and high-quality performance of services, the assessment of services has been reorganised and feedback from customers will be taken better into account in the future development of services. This will also increase resident participation.

---

## User satisfaction

Customer satisfaction surveys completed by residents are an integral part of the assessment of operations.

---

## Other improvements

- Transparency will be improved as residents will be better informed of the matters of the municipality and will have more say in them.
  - The new management system, which will be available for employees and elected representatives of the municipality, will also improve the internal transparency of the municipal services.
- 

## Results not available yet

The Training and Research Services of the University of Lapland made a preliminary evaluation in January 2013. Almost all members of the board and leading officials recognised that Utajärvi had developed an exceptional model. Particularly essential is the fact that the model helps a small municipality in adjusting to a changing environment. According to the results of the interviews, the actors in Utajärvi have been very pleased with the development of the model. At the same time, it is understood that the model is still a work in progress. Contents of the model will be created in implementation. A second evaluation session was held by Finnish Consulting Group in June 2013. The members of the municipal council and leading officials discussed the goals and results of the project. Results have been positive so far.

# Development

---

## Design

The municipal council resolved the development of the project in 2010. The members of the municipal council and leading officials discussed the content and goals of the project to meet the needs of both the municipality and its residents. Activities that are in line with the goals of the project were developed during numerous brainstorming meetings and seminars.

To ensure expertise and as wide a range of ideas as possible, all elected representatives and leading officials of the municipality were invited to participate from the first steps of the project.

Professor in Administrative Sciences, Jari Stenvall, gave valuable advice in the beginning of the administrative model development work.

The specialists in municipal administration from the Training and Research Services of the University of Lapland participated in seminars in order to incorporate the view of scientific research and to ensure that ideas and innovations were feasible.

Hearings and information events were also held for the residents to pool their ideas and gain feedback on the process.

Design time: 12 months

---

## Testing

In order to ensure smooth implementation and to map out the training needs of the personnel, a testing work group was established in May 2012 to test various aspects related to the implementation of the administrative model, such as the use of the new impact assessment procedure.

Testing time: 2 months

---

## Implementation

### Tools used:

- Municipality board and council discussions on the new administrative model and the achievement of the goals of the project.
- A number of development seminars to discuss the implementation of the new administrative model. Participants were elected representatives and municipal employees.
- Training and education related to the new administrative model has been arranged for elected representatives in November and December 2012 and the beginning of 2013.

### Resources used:

The budget allocated to the development project by the municipality of Utajärvi was as follows:

- Salaries: EUR 27 500
- Indirect personnel costs: EUR 14 000
- General costs of salaries: EUR 8 400
- Services from private sector suppliers: EUR 7 450
- Services from research institutes: EUR 14 900

Costs not included in the project budget:

- Integrated Management System: EUR 19 900
- Indirect costs were the participation of leading officials and elected representatives in development seminars during their working hours.
- Funding was applied and obtained from TEKES (Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation).

Implementation time: 2 months

---

## Diffusion

The new administration model has been presented at various seminars in Finland.

Diffusion time: 1 month

---

## Challenges and solutions

The tight schedule of the project was a challenge: the project commenced in November 2010 and it was scheduled to be completed by December 2012. The team dealt very well with the time constraint. Approximately 18 development seminars and several meetings were held during the last 12 months. It was challenging, but worth it.

---

## Partnerships

### University of Lapland

Academics and Research Bodies

Specialists from the Training and Research Services of the University of Lapland played an important role in the planning and development of the new administrative model. They also evaluated the results of the project.

Professor in Administrative Sciences Jari Stenvall gave specialist advice and support for the development work.

---

## Lessons Learned

---

### Lessons Learned

Based on our experience, we recommend that the schedule of a project of this scale should be flexible enough to allow for any unexpected outcomes. Also, the content and scope of the project must be clearly defined.

It is also important to choose a good third-party partner who can assess the progress of the project from different viewpoints and provide an out-of-the-box approach. The Training and Research Services of the University of Lapland was a good choice for the municipality of Utajärvi, and the support of professor Jari Stenvall encouraged developing the new administrative model.

We also have positive experience in engaging elected representatives and leading officials in the development work from early on, as was the case in Utajärvi.

We are happy to provide interested parties with further information on our experiences so that they can examine our new administrative model and consider what aspects can be applied to their respective organisations.

---

### Conditions for success

A real need for change and active cooperation between elected representatives and municipal employees.

---

Copyright OECD. All rights reserved.