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STREAMLINING PROJECT MANAGEMENT WITH MICROSOFT IN THE CITY OF STIRLING, AUSTRALIA

Project management can be both complex and challenging. And when projects span multiple areas, are interdependent, and cost many millions of dollars, project managers play a mission-critical role.

That is precisely the situation at the City of Stirling, which has taken a fresh look at how it supports project managers daily to deliver sustainable success. Located about 5 miles north of Perth's central business district and encompassing 30 suburbs, the City of Stirling has the largest population of any local government in Western Australia, and it is the state's second-largest employment district. Its 900 employees deliver more than 200 services and programs to approximately 223,000 residents in support of the city's vision of being a community where people choose to live, work, visit, and invest.

According to Paul Iswariah, Coordinator for IT Research and Projects at the City of Stirling, the city's size and complexity mean that his colleagues may manage numerous multimillion-dollar projects at any one time—with input, feedback, and impacts across multiple business units.

The city received good value from the investment it made in Microsoft Project Server 2007, but by the end of 2015, the city recognized that it needed a more modern system.

"Managers wanted more visibility and control over what people were working on," says Iswariah. "Our IT team needed the flexibility to manage infrastructure costs without upfront investment. And from a user perspective, employees wanted to work together easily from anywhere."

Faced with a fiscal-year deadline of June 30, 2016, Iswariah and his colleagues turned to Pcubed—a member of the Microsoft Partner Network that specializes in the Project and Portfolio Management (PPM) space—for help with the implementation.

By adopting Project Online, the city has fostered collaboration throughout its workforce. For example, each new project initiated also creates a project workspace where teams can work together, sharing and accessing linked information without having to wade through different documents. "Our project teams work more closely and confidently together now. Project managers assign clear workflows and tasks, and everyone can easily find all project information in the associated workspace.

The city plans to automate all templates and eliminate manual processes, which will enable it to enforce process governance while accelerating project workflows. Other plans include increased interoperability with the city's finance system and establishing minor, medium, and major workflow designations so that project managers can choose the appropriate level of documentation and governance for each project.

Most important, the City of Stirling now has the anytime reporting capabilities that executives and managers had sought, including the ability to view and interact with live data. "Because our projects frequently run across many different business areas, it's extremely valuable to use Project Online reporting capabilities for visibility into every project under a program," says Iswariah. "And we can get that visibility—with status alerts and easy-to-understand traffic light dashboards—on our mobile devices, which is especially helpful for our executives." City employees can get real-time information about the projects and programs right from the mobile app.

"The early success we've enjoyed with Project Online helped convince us to create a clear Microsoft cloud road map," says Iswariah. "We're broadening our scope and applying cloud benefits across our business to empower employees throughout the city to provide even better service for residents."