

PMI® Case Study

**COLORADO SPRINGS WELCOME HOME PARADE:**

Project Management Helps Welcome the Troops Home

With a short amount of time and limited budget, the city of Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA, planned a parade to welcome home troops returning from Iraq. The parade was perhaps the largest in Colorado Spring's history, and the largest celebration of its kind in the county. Using project management competencies found in PMI's de facto guide to the project management profession, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide)*—Third Edition, the project team planned and executed the parade successfully in spite of limited time and budget.

## **Background**

Colorado Springs is home to multiple branches of the military and six major bases, including Fort Carson and the Air Force Academy. The town decided to plan a welcome home parade for its soldiers who had been deployed to Iraq. Around 11,000 troops had been sent to Iraq for year-long rotations, and were to return in March 2004.

The parade was scheduled for 5 June 2004. All floats and participants were required to have a patriotic theme. Multiple teams came together to plan the event.

The project management team was lead by O'Donnell & O'Donnell LLP, which had experience with parade planning in addition to fundraising, which would prove to be an important part of this project.

The City Council of Colorado Springs also donated city resources and personnel to the project, including the assistant city manager, who was the main link between the city and the project team. Providing the team with daily access to city officials ensured key communication throughout the project.

In addition to the project team, the city also established a management team committee, composed of stakeholders and representatives from each local military base. These two teams met regularly to give status reports, offer or ask for assistance, and determine the next steps in the project. This open forum for communication fostered a greater understanding for each party's role in the project and what the end result would be. All high level changes were made by the committee, while the detail changes were made by the project team.

## **Challenges**

The two major challenges of this project were the lack of money to fund the parade and the limited timeframe to complete the project.

Security and safety also stood as risks to the event.

The project team faced the challenge of raising all funds for the parade, as the city could not finance the event. The event budget and reimbursement for their services would come only from the donations and sponsorship money raised. The city capped the fee amount O'Donnell & O'Donnell could charge them, and also established a separate account for the event so they could accurately track finances.

Last minute changes also posed a challenge. Project stakeholders from Fort Carson requested the troops be fed lunch after the parade. The city raised the fee caps, but the project team had to include catering, organization and clean-up in an already tight schedule.

### **Solutions**

In order to combat the limited budget and timeframe, the project team used every stakeholder's resources, asking what each organization could contribute to the event. The project was then approached in reverse order; the scope of a project is typically established before the resources, but the project team had to establish resources to determine project scope.

Although the city could not contribute monetarily to the project, it offered in-kind services by having every city department participate. In addition to those workers, the project team used its own volunteer base of 35-40 people. Many of the sponsoring organizations also offered their services at reduced fees or free of charge. In return, sponsors and donors received a banner and viewing stand at the parade for their contributions.

The team used project management competencies throughout the project to:

- coordinate a donation of 40 buses from city transportation department to transport the 6,000 soldiers participating in the parade;
- work with city police to arrange parking for buses;
- coordinate with city engineers to control traffic lights to minimize convoy's effect on city traffic flow;
- inform town in advance of any road closures or delays caused by parade preparations; and
- overcome challenge of providing last-minute lunch to troops by securing free food and service through local restaurant franchise,

using local park as venue and volunteers from Chamber of Commerce to help serve food.

In addition, risk management techniques were used to anticipate and prevent potential problems:

- the team held meetings with local fire and police departments and management committees to discuss risk responses;
- police responded to traffic congestion by finding alternate routes for cars during parade;
- the fire department positioned rescue crews along route in case of an emergency; and
- paramedics passed out water to prevent dehydration

## **Results**

The parade consisted of 22 floats, 23 fire trucks and eight marching bands, including the U.S. Army Field Band from Fort Meade, Md. Many antique military aircraft and other vehicles took part in the parade, and over 65,000 people came to watch the historical event and show their support for the troops.

The public communications department for the city took care of all publicity and interviews at no cost; three local television stations and six local radio stations held live broadcasts from the parade and related events; and photographers from local newspapers were on site. The White House even issued a statement about the event, which was read at the parade and on all local broadcasts.

Project management techniques enabled the project team to coordinate the event, raise funds and accommodate last minute changes within a remarkably short time frame. As a result, the Colorado Springs Welcome Home Parade was the largest event of its kind ever held in Colorado Springs.

## **Key Achievements**

- The project team organized and executed all aspects of the event such as fund raising, the coordination of soldiers and aircraft, and planning a lunch reception for 9,000 people, all within a five month time period.
- The project team executed the parade under the allocated budget, and the city manager donated excess funds to military charities.