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## **Individual Development at the City of North St. Paul**

**February 21, 2014**

Team 3:

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Employee Development – HRIR 8034

North St. Paul – Resilient Communities Project

This project was supported by the Resilient Communities Project (RCP), a program at the University of Minnesota that convenes the wide-ranging expertise of U of M faculty and students to address strategic local projects that advance community resilience and sustainability. RCP is a program of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) and the Institute on the Environment.



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## **Introduction**

Individual development planning is a crucial but often overlooked and misunderstood organizational success factor. The goal of this proposal is to shine a new light on the benefits and success factors to take into account when implementing an Individual Development Plan (IDP). Structurally, this proposal will establish the scope of this analysis and identify the importance of building an individual development program in conjunction with other employee development initiatives. Secondly, we will highlight some of the infrastructural elements necessary to successful planning and implementation of IDPs while relating those considerations to stated and observed deficiencies in the City of North Saint Paul. Finally, we will propose recommendations for a robust IDP program involving personal, professional, and community development opportunities.

At its core, effective individual development planning makes business sense in spite of common perceptions to the contrary. Of the 20% of organizations with no individual development processes in place, lack of resources, time, and leadership support are among the most commonly cited reasons. (Implementing Effective Employee Development, 2012) However, we contend that when used effectively, individual development programs reduce training costs, increase retention, and establish a framework for succession planning. They also increase employee engagement by strengthening team dynamics, institutionalizing performance feedback, and empowering employees with ownership in their personal and professional goals.

One of the common problems with implementing an individual development program is that in implantation, it can become a purely academic or theoretical endeavor. It is seen as an imposition with little connection to daily operations. We contend that individual development planning can and should be possible with minimal expenditure of resources and time. Development planning is not a new concept as much a framework with which to connect the individual goals, ambitions, and abilities of your employees to organizational values and objectives. By making this connection, organizations are able to increase employee engagement, retention, and productivity. (Implementing Effective Employee Development, 2012)

In order to make this proposal meaningful and accessible, we have chosen to limit the

scope of our recommendations to the implementation of a new individual development program. While we recognize the importance of ongoing program refinement and integration with other organizational initiatives, this proposal will intentionally treat IDPs independently from other systemic issues like change management, performance management, and employee onboarding. Given that our analysis will have an intentionally limited scope, we recommend that any subsequent IDP program be viewed and built in conjunction with the recommendations brought forth by other group proposals.

## **Related Issues in Implementing Individual Development Plan**

### **Communication**

Effective communication skills are essential to the success of personal development. Without effective communication skills, the employees may not be able to achieve their goals and perform their job properly. As a result, the business can suffer from low productivity and low employee morale (Forneris, n.d.). For the City of North St. Paul, we have identified the following two concrete actions for effective communication:

#### ***1. Giving formal and informal feedback.***

Feedback is important as it helps individuals to understand what they are doing well, and to target things that they want to do better. Delivering meaningful feedback would assist individuals in identifying their own strengths and developmental needs. According to Wiggins, there are seven keys to giving effective feedback: goal-referenced, tangible and transparent, actionable, user-friendly, timely, ongoing, and consistent (See Appendix 1). These elements should be used as guidance for managers to deliver meaningful feedback.

Formal feedback often takes place on a semi-annual or annual basis and will require a longer reference period. Informal feedback is ongoing, instant advice outside of the formal performance reviews. We recommend managers at the City of North St. Paul conduct regular meetings – best if weekly – to provide informal feedback regarding their past and current performances. With the frequency of informal feedback, the employees should not be surprised with the performance evaluation in the formal annual sessions.

## ***2. Developing a communication calendar.***

Establishing healthy employee relations is critical to the success of an IDP and it can be accomplished by developing several communication touch points between the managers and direct reports. We suggest five main communication frequencies: daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual communications (See Appendix 2). Daily conversations tend to be more collegial. Managers can ask questions such as “what projects are you currently working on” in order to build ongoing daily interactions. Weekly communications may include 1-on-1 sessions, coaching sessions, team meetings, and newsletters. This would be a great opportunity to discuss the employees’ progress against the plan and capture the problems that the employees appear to struggle in achieving the goals set forth in the IDP. Monthly newsletters are essential in providing business updates, such as new incomers, upcoming events, new procedures/implementations, and job opportunities. Quarterly team/department meetings are crucial as it is important for individuals to understand any changes in goal for the organization or team so that they can amend their IDP accordingly.

### **Manager Training**

Managers’ main responsibility with IDPs is to assist their direct reports in creating a development plan, to help employees grow within the organization and to evaluate their performance. As a result, it is critical for managers to have the ability to communicate effectively and evaluate whether the investment in developmental activities resulted in improved individual performance. We recommend that the City of North St. Paul create training modules, in-person trainings, and/or online live sessions which would provide further guidance and tools on delivering effective communications, IDP discussions, and performance reviews.

### **Job Description**

When developing an IDP plan, it is important to understand where you are and identify where you want to be. By reviewing the current full-performance job description, the employees should be able to determine the differences between their current knowledge, skills, and abilities and those that are required to function at the full

performance (The Individual Development Plan, 2008). It is important for the City of North St. Paul to develop a job description for each job including all aspects of what the position entails (See Appendix 3). Since this would be a project that would require time to develop, we suggest the City of North St. Paul recruit HR interns to help build job descriptions in the near future.

### **Employee Buy-In**

Since IDPs are new to the employees at City of North St. Paul, getting employee buy-in would be a critical component to a development plan's success (Creating Individual Plans, 2010). We suggest two main ways to increase employee buy-in. First, the IDP should incorporate employee input. The employees usually have better knowledge of the areas that they perform well, and the areas that require improvement. Managers would learn these aspects after observing and discussing with the employee his/her performance. Thus, if the employees cannot provide their own input in creating an IDP, it would seriously affect their buy-in. Second, set employee goals that are achievable. If the goals are set too far out-of-reach, it will discourage the employee's commitment.

### **Individual Development Plan**

Addressing the underlying related issues discussed above will help lay the foundation to build a comprehensive individual development plan for all employees working for the City of North St. Paul. When implementing an IDP, it is important to take the "whole employee" into account. Many organizations try and implement IDPs that focus strictly on individual professional development. However, that approach does not address two critical pieces of individual development. A comprehensive IDP should take into account the employee's personal interests and needs, along with the environment, or "community" in which they work. Therefore, this section will provide suggestions on how to construct an IDP, focusing on an individual's personal, professional, and community development. (An IDP for any given year could focus more on one area or another as needed.)

## **Personal Development**

### **1. Relevance**

It is important for organizations to create a culture that encourages, supports and invests in the short and long term development of their employees. Personal IDPs are something managers and employees should consider when discussing employee development. While IDPs mainly focus on career development, personal development is often overlooked. Employees must have their personal needs met to be an effective employee in the workplace.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (See Appendix 7) is a theory, which states that fundamental personal needs must be fulfilled before one can reach self-actualization. There are five levels (physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization) in the hierarchy and each level must be achieved before one can move onto the next. Maslow describes the achievement of self-actualization as the desire to accomplish everything that one can, to become the most that one can be – reaching one's full potential. When considering personal development it is important to refer back to this theory.

### **2. Best Practices/Benefits**

A culture of encouragement and support decreases absenteeism. "Employees who felt they worked in a loving, caring culture reported higher levels of satisfaction and teamwork," write researchers Sigal Barsade and Olivia O'Neill in *Harvard Business Review*. They show up for work more often, and their attitude impacts relationships with clients.

Benefits of fulfilling the personal needs of an employee allow them to be happier and more efficient. For example, if an employee is going through a messy divorce, they may be unable to attain a feeling of love and belonging at home and therefore unable to reach their full potential in the workplace. It is beneficial to an organization for employees to have their personal needs met because they become a more productive member in the workplace. Characteristics of people who have reached self-actualization are acceptance of the world around them, problem-solving, spontaneity in internal thoughts, autonomy, and continual sense of appreciation (Cherry 2014). Problem-solving, autonomy, and continual sense of appreciation are especially beneficial in the

workplace.

### **3. Recommendations**

Discussing personal IDPs does not necessarily have to be an individual development plan. These discussions can range from topics that are going on in the employee's personal life they feel are helping or hindering their performance at work, to managers giving "kudos" to employees for a job well done. Personal development conversations with an employee can be done on a weekly or monthly basis. Frequent conversations helps create an open line of communication with managers and employees, which is critical in developing a quality relationship. It is key for managers to be available to their staff – if managers expect their staff to be dedicated, managers must be available to respond to issues and questions. *Fast Company* recently released an article stating that "employees join companies but they quit managers" (Vozza 2014). "Bad managers" are one of the top reasons employees leave an organization.

While it is important for managers to focus on the professional development of employees it is also crucial for managers to pay attention to the personal lives of their employees. How an organization reacts to an employee's divorce, a death in the family, or a new baby can make a big difference in how employees feel about their workplace. Responding to these events with cards, flowers or extra vacation time will show them that you acknowledge what is going on in their personal lives. Little things like this make a big difference and could increase job satisfaction and decrease turnover.

It is not the manager's job to be an employee's counselor, but it is important for a supervisor to recognize and acknowledge the role our personal lives play in our professional work. Having an open line of communication and a willingness to give the employee some latitude on developing what is considered a personal goal will be of immense benefit in creating an overall culture of community for North St. Paul.

### **4. Overcoming Obstacles**

Discussing personal development with an employee may be difficult. Employees may not feel comfortable opening up to managers about their personal goals and issues. Some employees may over-share about their personal lives and some may even use personal issues as an excuse for poor performance. In order to overcome these pitfalls it is important to create a sense of community in the workplace where

employees trust their managers. This can be done through regular meetings and conversations. In order to avoid over sharing and excuses for poor performance, it is crucial to set guidelines for what is appropriate in the workplace. These guidelines can be set during manager training and focus on discretion, depending on their specific relationship with their employee.

**Professional Development**

**1. Relevance**

The professional development portion of an IDP should be centered on an employee’s professional development. It helps employees to focus their professional efforts and identify key competencies that are linked to quality job performance. Because this supports professional quality, IDPs should be aligned with the performance management system.

**2. Best Practices/Benefits**

A well-crafted and delivered IDP is important because it delivers benefits to the individual, their profession and the City of North St. Paul.

<b>For Employees</b>	Individual Development Plan (IDP) can be useful to help guide development and assess your progress toward career objectives or better performance. The Individual Development Plan provides a method to clearly articulate what competencies, knowledge, skill or ability you need to develop, how you plan to develop, and where and when you plan to apply your new skills and abilities as an indication of progress/success.
<b>For Managers</b>	An employee’s IDP is a helpful resource to enable you to effectively coach and develop as an employee progresses toward his or her career objectives or better performance. The IDP provides clarity about the specific knowledge, skill, or ability the employee needs to develop. It serves as a roadmap for how, when, where, and to what extent employees will develop and apply their skills to indicate progress and/or success.
<b>For City of North St. Paul</b>	Professional development helps to ensure that all employees have the knowledge and skills needed to meet current and future business needs. It also helps to ensure that the city will have the talent and depth of experience necessary to deliver public service.

**3. Recommendations**

Identifying competencies for increasing job performance and development

opportunities are two of the keys to a successful IDP. The attached template and work sheet (See Appendix 4) will facilitate the communication, and roles and responsibilities for creating IDP and its development objectives is a partnership between employees, managers, and the city.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<b>Employee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Initiates and drives individual development</li> <li>○ Assesses competencies (or skills)</li> <li>○ Creates Individual Development Plan (IDP) with manager support and input</li> <li>○ Identifies and engages in development activities</li> <li>○ Applies new skills on the job</li> <li>○ Seeks manager and/or colleague feedback on development needs and progress</li> <li>○ Discusses progress towards development plan with manager on regular basis</li> </ul>
<b>Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensures direct reports have IDP</li> <li>○ Validates employee's skills in job description</li> <li>○ Provides input for the creation and implementation of IDP</li> <li>○ Removes obstacles in the environment that may hinder employee's progress towards development objectives</li> <li>○ Secures and allocates resources/opportunities for development</li> <li>○ Provides feedback to employee on utilization of new skills</li> <li>○ Discusses progress towards employee's development plan with employee on regular basis</li> <li>○ Documents progress towards employee's development plan in template/work sheet (See Appendix 4) on a regular basis (quarterly, yearly)</li> </ul>
<b>City of North St. Paul</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Coaches managers in aligning employee performance and development objectives with the organization's goals and objectives and in supporting employees as they create their individual development plans</li> <li>○ Provides an environment and culture which values employee development</li> <li>○ Rewards employees and managers for effective utilization of the employee development process</li> <li>○ Communicates business direction and corporate plans for addressing business and skill needs</li> <li>○ Invests resources in employee development</li> </ul>

#### **4. Overcoming Obstacles**

Related issues that we covered above are possible pitfalls to IDP. In addition, lack of clear job descriptions and career development opportunities may hinder professional IDPs from being successful. Since the IDP focuses on significant competencies, or KSAOs (knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics) for the job and identifying the opportunity to develop it, clear job descriptions will be helpful. There are likely limited lateral or vertical career moves for employees within the city to make. Therefore, it will be a challenge to develop opportunities for employees to develop beyond their current role.

Communication between an employee and his or her manager is the priority solution to determining the significant competencies for the job when there is no clear job description. By using the template/worksheet attached (See Appendix 4), managers can facilitate the conversation. Mentoring is another way to encourage employees to find their development opportunity. Mentees will learn from the mentors on how to develop skills or abilities to achieve better performance in their current role, and where they can find the opportunity to do it based on an environment and culture that values employee development.

### **Community Development**

#### **1. Relevance**

In keeping with developing every aspect of each individual that works for the City of North St. Paul, community development is the remaining piece to examine. Building a stronger sense of “community” within the workplace creates strong bonds between the individual employee, the organization, and co-workers. It also increases employee satisfaction while reducing turnover. Research has shown employees who feel a stronger sense of connection to the organization and their co-workers are more likely to stay with an organization. Allen, et al. (2010) “identify several key predictors of this intent to stay including organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and relationships with co-workers”. This section will focus on the specific benefits to the City of North St. Paul for building a stronger community amongst city staff to bolster those predictors, address recommendations for community activities to implement, examine potential

complications with initiating such a strong initiative, and advice on overcoming those complications. The appendix also contains templates of a sample newsletter and monthly calendar, to make implementation easier, (Appendices 5 and 6).

## ***2. Best Practices/Benefits***

Creating a well-rounded community within all departments of North St. Paul is important for five specific reasons. First and foremost, it creates a sense of community and “togetherness” that has been lacking for years, according to current employees. Creating synergy and cohesion within and between city departments is critical for ongoing success and employee happiness. Second, building a strong sense of community, teamwork, and belonging will also aid in increasing communication within each business unit, and across functions. Third, initiating activities that engage employees outside of their daily work can be used as a time to recognize particular employees or departments for certain accomplishments. Fourth, it would also provide an opportunity for city employees to celebrate their accomplishments in successfully running a municipality together. Lastly, it also will promote healthier employees and a more stable workplace.

## ***3. Recommendations***

Our team has decided to focus on four community building initiatives that will be relatively easy for the city to implement and will be very cost effective. The initiatives will help strengthen employee recognition and overall communication within the organization, which are currently two main problems the city is facing. First, we are recommending the City of North St. Paul implement a wellness program. We would recommend recruiting volunteers from the police and fire departments to teach weight training and proper workout techniques and routines to all interested employees for one hour every month. The city has dedicated space to a fitness facility, and employees should learn how to properly use it.

Second, we are recommending the city host quarterly social events. For example, a city-wide employee holiday party in December, a spring outing of some sort in April, a summer barbecue in July, and a happy hour or other social event in October. All employees would be strongly encouraged to attend and bring their families if they choose. These events can also be used to recognize employees who have gone above

and beyond their daily job duties throughout the previous quarter, which strengthens the employee recognition initiative.

Third, we suggest publishing and distributing a monthly City of North St. Paul newsletter/calendar to all employees (a template is in the appendix and is available in electronic form). This will allow for city updates, procedural changes, new employee hires, healthy eating recipes, etc. to be published on a monthly basis and distributed to employees for their ongoing development. The calendar should highlight all city activities available to employees including gym training, social events, and important dates to remember. Not only will the publication keep employees up-to-date, but it will also help foster better overall communication between city workers within and between departments.

Lastly, we are recommending implementing “Snowman Share”, a bi-weekly or monthly half-hour meeting where any available city employees gather to share what is happening in their department. Departments can rotate giving short presentations at each meeting to highlight what their department is doing or new processes they are implementing. All available employees should be encouraged to attend. The city may want to consider incentivizing attendance with a reward of some kind given by drawing a name at the close of each meeting.

#### ***4. Overcoming Obstacles***

An internal “community” building initiative will not be easily done. There are several complications or pitfalls that may arise during implementation. First, the organization must follow through on the activities and initiatives once started. Employees expressed they were discouraged by previous leadership’s ability to follow through on projects when they were started. One way to avoid this pitfall is to appoint one to three people to be in charge of each initiative, and hold them accountable for continuing it after it has been started. These additional duties could be part of the IDP for the selected employees.

Next, and probably most importantly, employees do not feel there is a sense of community within the City at this time. Therefore, getting people to participate, feel connected enough to the City to participate, and break from the ‘status quo’, will be difficult. However, increasing general communication and correspondence of events,

and showing employees that the City of North St. Paul cares enough about their employees to continue these initiatives (even if participation at the beginning is low), will prove the City leadership is serious about fostering a sense of “community” and developing individual employees to the best of the City’s ability.

### **Conclusion**

Individual development planning can be a difficult project for any organization to implement. At the same time, it is an absolutely crucial part of building a stable, reliable, and sustainable workforce. Our preceding analysis and recommendations are intended to provide a framework with which North St. Paul can assess the individual development needs of its employees in a balanced, holistic way. We want to highlight how goals and conversations around individual development can take many forms and there are an enormous amount of resources and best practices available for organizations that are willing to invest in their employees. We also want to convey that investment in the personal, professional, and community development of employees makes business sense and it’s not just another piece of administrative paperwork to pop in a drawer and ignore until next year. It is a continuous process that with support and time builds a happier, more engaged, and more efficient employee population.

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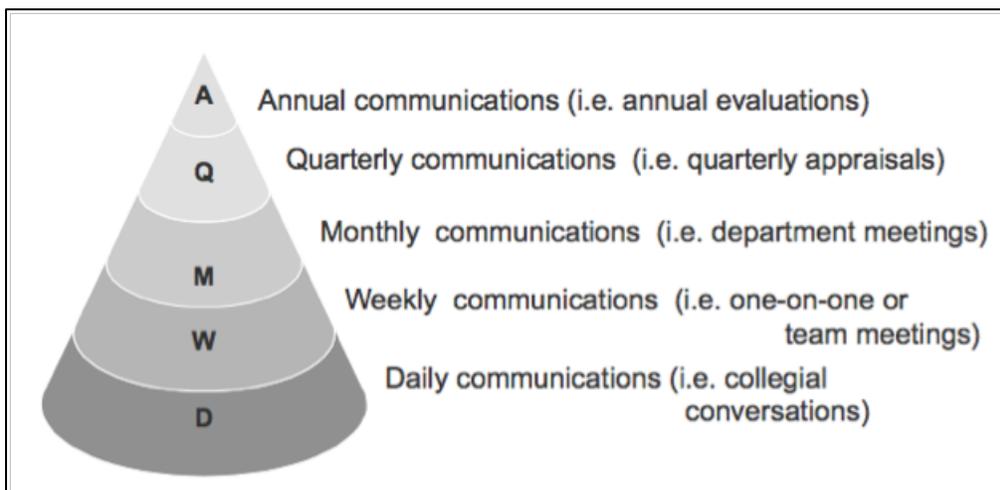
## Appendices

### Appendix A: Seven Keys to Effective Feedback

Effective feedback requires that a person has a goal, takes action to achieve the goal, and receives goal-related information about his or her actions.	1) Goal-referenced
Any useful feedback system involves not only a clear goal, but also tangible results related to the goal.	2) Tangible and Transparent
Effective feedback is concrete, specific, and useful; it provides <i>actionable</i> information.	3) Actionable
Even if feedback is specific and accurate in the eyes of experts or bystanders, it is not of much value if the user cannot understand it or is overwhelmed by it.	4) User-friendly
In most cases, the sooner I get feedback, the better.	5) Timely
Adjusting our performance depends on not only receiving feedback but also having opportunities to use it.	6) Ongoing
To be useful, feedback must be consistent.	7) Consistent

Source: Wiggins, Grant (2012) Seven Keys to Effective Feedback. September 2012. Volume 70. Number 1. Feedback for Learning Pages 10-16. Educational Leadership. ASCD. Arlington, VA.

### Appendix B: Communications Calendar



Source: Implementing Effective Employee Development Planning. London: McLean & Company, 10 Aug. 2012. PPT.

### **Appendix C: Five key elements to include in job description:**

1. The job description must clearly identify the job by including information such as the job title, department, and immediate supervisor.
2. The job summary is a brief description of the job that highlights its general characteristics. The job summary should describe the purpose of the job -- why the job exists. It is especially useful to anyone who wants to obtain a quick overview of the job.
3. In many ways the essential functions section is the most important part of a job description because it outlines the job functions that absolutely must be performed. Nonessential functions and marginal duties are often described in a separate section titled "Additional Responsibilities."
4. The accountabilities section not only describes the end results achieved when job duties are performed satisfactorily, but it also mentions specific standards for measuring performance.
5. Job specifications describe the specific job requirements in terms of compensable factors. Job specifications are used primarily for rating jobs in the evaluation process and assigning a wage rate or salary level.

Source: "Key Elements for a Job Title and Job Description." HR.BLR.com. N.p., 11 Feb. 2011. Web. 16 Feb. 2014. <<http://hr.blr.com/HR-news/Compensation/Job-Descriptions/Key-Elements-for-a-Job-Title-and-Job-Description#>>.

**Appendix D: Sample Individual Development Plan (IDP) Template/Worksheet**



**Employee Name:** Pat Smith  
**Title:** Project Manager  
**Supervisor:** Robert Kowalski

**Individual Development Plan Summary**

Strengths	Opportunities
• • • • •	• • • • •

**Development Goals & Action Plans**

Development Goal	Timeline for Completion	Measurement of Achievement	Development Method	Progress Update
Project management skills including budgeting and developing project charter	Dec 31, 2011	Able to manage an end-to-end project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal project management program</li> <li>Coaching from Sr. Project Manager</li> </ul>	
[Insert goal]	[Date]	[Measure]	[Describe method]	
[Insert goal]	[Date]	[Measure]	[Describe method]	

**Manager Support Required**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Manager Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix E:**

This is a blank and printable monthly calendar (This happens to be February). Courtesy of WinCalendar.com. This is fully editable if downloaded from WinCalendar.com.

◀ Jan 2014							Mar 2014 ▶
~ February 2014 ~							
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
						1	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
23	24	25	26	27	28	Notes:	

More Calendars from WinCalendar: [Mar 2014](#), [Apr 2014](#), [May 2014](#)

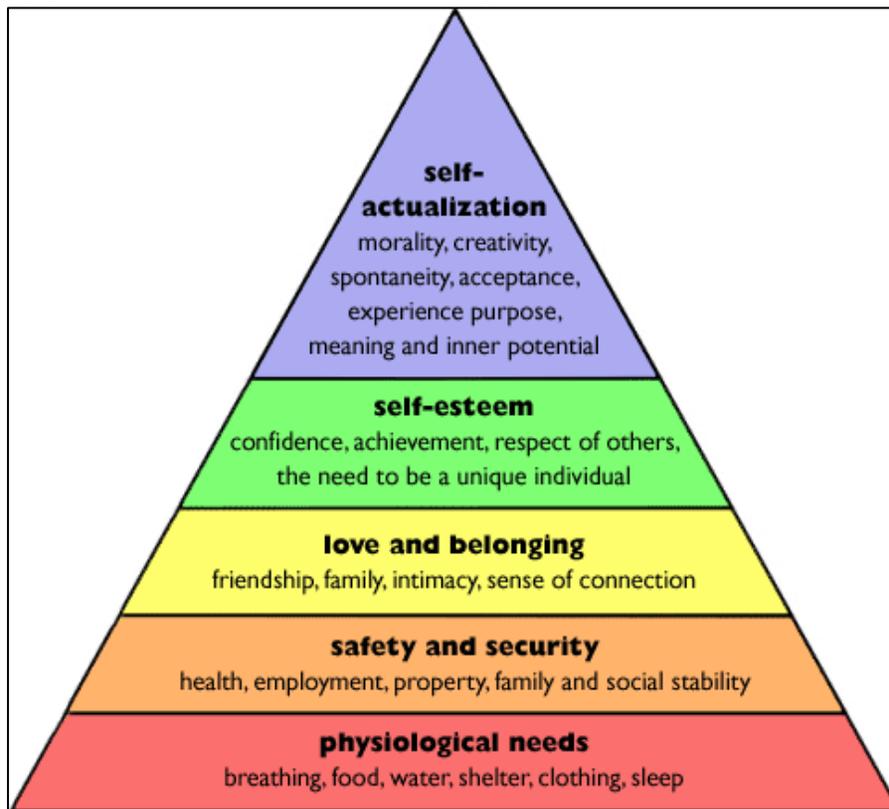
Created with [WinCalendar](#) Calendar Creator for Word and Excel.

▶ You can also import Google Calendar, Yahoo, Outlook & Ical data onto created calendars.

**Appendix F: This is a sample newsletter template. You can create one specific to North St. Paul in MS Word.**



## Appendix G: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Source: Maslow, A. H. (1943). Theory of human behavior. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396.