CONSUMER SERVICES Department Business Plan

Fiscal Years: 2010 and 2011

(10/1/09 through 9/30/11)

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BUSINESS PLAN REPORT

DEPARTMENT PURPOSE/MISSION

The Consumer Services Department (CSD) is the County's consumer protection arm. CSD licenses and regulates specific industries, conducts consumer, youth, family, and business education, and mediates consumer disputes against private businesses.

Vision Statement

A community of educated consumers and sustainable businesses prospering in a fair and equitable marketplace.

Mission Statement

Enhancing the quality of life for residents, visitors and businesses through education, licensing and regulation, and the investigation and mediation of consumer complaints.

Additional departmental information can be found in the Departmental Profile (Attachment 1).

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

1. The Department's efforts align with the following Miami-Dade County Strategic Plan Goals:

- *Lead the coordination of economic development activities throughout Miami-Dade County (ED2)*
- *Expand entrepreneurial development opportunities within Miami-Dade County (ED3)*
- *Create a more business-friendly environment in Miami-Dade County (ED4)*
- *Improve the future of Miami-Dade County's children and youth(HH3)*
- *Promote independent living through early intervention and support services (HH4)*
- *Empower the community by increasing communications and coordination with local, state, and federal entities (NU2)*
- *Promote responsible stewardship of natural resources and unique community environments (NU3)*
- *Use consistent, fair and effective means to achieve code compliance (NU4)*
- *Enact programs to beautify and improve urban and residential areas (NU5)*

Departmental Business Plan and Outlook
Department Name:
Fiscal Years: 2009-10 & 2010-11

II. Department-related Strategic Plan Outcomes, Departmental Objectives, and Programs & Initiatives:

1.1 Better informed clients served by various assistance programs (ED2-3)

1.1.a. Resolve disputes between consumers and businesses

- *Track and analyze consumer complaints (On-going)*
- *Close consumer complaints expeditiously (On-going)*
- *Obtain consumer refunds or credits due to mediation efforts (On-going)*
- *Enhance the effectiveness of mediation efforts (On-going)*

1.1.b. Provide educational opportunities for consumers

- *Conduct educational and outreach programs on consumer protection laws and conduct small claims clinics (On-going)*
- *Publish monthly Consumer Wise "Tricks of the Trade" covering a wide range of consumer related subjects for Miami-Dade County's residents and visitors (On-going)*
- *Encourage financial literacy through money management programs (On-going)*
- *Expand consumer awareness programs to create better informed consumers (On-going)*

2.1. Organizations empowered with the technical and management capacity to succeed (ED3-1)

2.1 Promote a sustainable agricultural industry and practices that protect the environment

- *Conduct educational programs for agricultural, commercial, and public sector employees about plant selection and maintenance, resource management, and using pesticides (On-going)*

3.1 Customer friendly environment for regulated businesses (ED4-2)

3.1 Secure customer satisfaction and trust

- *Utilize customer satisfaction surveys to improve service (On-going)*
- *Expedite licensing, registration and inspection processes (On-going)*

4.1 Young adults with basic education, skills and values (HH3-3)

4.1 Provide educational opportunities for youth

- *Develop citizenship and leadership skills through the 4-H program (On-going)*

5.1 Promote Healthy Communities (HH4-1)

5.1 Develop healthy families through sound nutritional practices

- *Conduct food and family nutrition education (On-going)*

6.1 Improved community access to information and services (NU2-2)

6.1 Empower consumers to make informed decisions

- *Implement on-line access to licensing and business complaint information (On-going)*
- *Track unique visitors and downloads to department websites (On-going)*

7.1 Well-trained, customer-friendly County government workforce (NU2-3)

7.1a Provide employees with skills that enable service excellence and career advancement

- *Assess customer satisfaction by conducting surveys (On-going)*
- *Cultivate and recognize employee excellence through the employee recognition (On-going)*
- *Encourage participation in professional development training (On-going)*
- *Develop future leaders through the Consumer Services Department succession plan (On-going)*
- *Publish quarterly employee newsletter (On-going)*
- *Conduct new employee orientation sessions (On-going)*
- *Celebrate employee achievements at group recognition ceremonies (On-going)*

7.1b Improve efficiency through technology

- *Improve productivity and efficiency by deploying remote access and input of data by field enforcement officers (Finish FY 2009-10)*
- *Install GPS units in department vehicles and use the data to implement efficiencies in inspections and fuel expenses (On-going)*

7.1c Improve operations and the work environment

- *Participate in the Sterling Challenge (Finish FY 2009-10)*

8.1 Promote responsible stewardship of natural resources and unique community environments (NU3-1))

8.1 Promote water conservation

- *Promote homeowner participation in the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Landscape Irrigation Efficiency Project (On-going)*
- *Conduct rain barrel workshops (On-going)*

9.1 Consistent interpretation and application of enforcement practices (NU4-3)

9.1a Promote for-hire transportation services that meet the needs of the public

- *Conduct enforcement operations and taxicab surveys at MIA (On-going)*
- *Track complaints and citations originating at MIA and POM (On-going)*
- *Monitor jitney operations (On-going)*
- *Track Special Transportation Service (STS) vehicle and chauffeur contacts per month (On-going)*
- *Provide enforcement services at the Port of Miami (On-going)*
- *Track enforcement actions (On-going)*
- *Conduct for-hire enforcement services to ensure the success of important special events such as the Pro Bowl and Super Bowl 2010 (Finish FY 2009-10)*
- *Conduct special operations to measure compliance with for-hire regulations (On-going)*
- *Evaluate alternative funding sources to properly resource for-hire enforcement (On-going)*
- *Develop and submit amendments to ordinances, as appropriate, in the following areas: for-hire chauffeur eligibility standards; taxicab technology; and passenger motor carriers, including jitneys (Start FY 2009-10)*
- *Improve wheelchair accessible taxicab services (On-going)*

9.1b Promote regulations that support fair business practices

- *Develop and submit amendments to ordinances, as appropriate, in the following areas: motor vehicle repair shops and towing companies (Start FY 2009-10)*

10.1 Enact programs to beautify and improve urban and residential areas (NU5)

10.1 Sustain Florida friendly landscaping and tree canopy

- *Ensure proper tree selection and maintenance (On-going)*
- *Implement proper pruning techniques for hurricane and tree health (On-going)*
- *Advocate pest control in landscapes (On-going)*

PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND TARGETS

For ease of reference, specific information regarding departmental objectives and performance measures including the targets for FY 2009-10 and FY 2010-11 can be found in Attachment 2 – Business Plan Report.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- Sufficient staff resources, staffing levels and successful recruitment efforts
- Absence of adverse legislation that preempts or reduces of any regulatory programs or general consumer protection laws
- No additional programs which are not self-supporting
- Maintaining constructive dialogue with industry groups in reviewing policies, ordinances, fee schedules and initiatives
- Regulatory fee schedules that fully support regulatory activities
- Continuation of general fund support of Extension services
- Continuation of the partnership with the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences in support of Extension programs
- Financial support from the Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM), the Solid Waste Management Department (SWMD), and the Water and Sewer Department (WASD) for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program (FYN), and environmental education relating to natural resources protection and water conservation
- Continued financial support from Miami-Dade Transit Agency for training of Non-emergency and Special Transportation Service providers
- Continued financial support from the Seaport Department to provide starter service and for-hire enforcement activities at the Seaport

INTERNAL SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS

- Service level agreement with the Enterprise Technology Services Department for computer technical support that includes on-site, 24/7 same day service for wide and local area (WAN & LAN) networks, servers, and desktop maintenance.

- Service level agreement with the Enterprise Technology Services Department for updating CSD's web site that includes a minimum of fifteen (15) hours per month of online consulting, design, development, publishing and hosting services.

- Stability in rental expense when CSD relocates from the Miami-Dade Flagler Building to the new Overtown II office space

SUSTAINABILITY

- Reduce unleaded fuel consumption through the evaluation of data obtained from GPS units installed in department vehicles
- Contribute to the County's water conservation efforts by continuing to enroll and evaluate water consumption through the Landscape Irrigation Efficiency Program, and by conducting rain barrel training directed to homeowners
- Reduce total paper consumption by utilizing electronic distribution of notices, newsletters, and internal documents, and utilizing two-sided copies

3 to 5 YEAR OUTLOOK

CSD will be relocating to another County building in the future. This will provide both new opportunities, such as co-locating licensing functions into a single area, and challenges, such as an anticipated increase in rent that may impact services or result in higher licensing fees.

CSD has been engaged in a review of business regulations relating to for-hire transportation. A continuing goal is to expand the administrative authority to issue licenses that currently require Commission approval. Technology improvements in the taxicab industry are key to ensuring services that meet the needs of the public. Standards for electronic GPS dispatch, two-way radio requirements, credit card processing, and driver security systems such as in-vehicle security cameras are all advances that need to be made.

Due to the downturn in the economy, it is anticipated that there will be a renewed emphasis on preventing consumer fraud that will result in an increase in settlement agreements and enforcement actions.

Continuing challenges exist for the agricultural industry related to production costs, invasive pests, foreign competition, and the regulatory environment, to remain competitive and retain viable acreage. Agricultural programs must remain relevant and responsive to arising issues

in the near term with adequate professional staffing to conduct training and provide appropriate technical assistance for the industry. As funds continue to be tight, additional sources of funding need to be evaluated.

Maintenance of the Urban Conservation Unit, as part of the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program to fulfill water conservation plan goals, will be critical in assisting the County with the 5-year water conservation plan mandated by the South Florida Water Management District relating to the 20-year consumptive use permit. Training for applicators of fertilizer, mandated by State law, will continue for a five (5) year period.

Attachment 1

DEPARTMENTAL PROFILE

Department Description

The Consumer Services Department (CSD) is the County's consumer protection arm. CSD licenses and regulates specific industries, conducts consumer, youth, family, and business education, and mediates consumer disputes against private businesses. In addition to the Director's Office, the CSD accomplishes these responsibilities through the Consumer Protection Division, Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division, and the Cooperative Extension Service Division.

Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division

The Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division licenses and regulates taxicabs, limousines, passenger motor carriers (including jitneys and tour vans), special transportation service vehicles, non-emergency transportation services, for-hire chauffeurs, and ambulance services. For-hire vehicles, as well as private school buses, are inspected for safety and appearance at our vehicle inspection station. The Division maintains an extensive chauffeur training schedule for new and renewing for-hire chauffeurs.

Consumer Protection Division

The Consumer Protection Division licenses and regulates motor vehicle repair shops and mechanics, locksmith businesses and locksmiths, local moving companies, towing businesses, vehicle immobilization (booting) companies and employees, title loan lenders, water remetering companies, and registers telecommunications providers and domestic partnerships. The Consumer Complaint Mediation Center recovered over $1.2 million dollars in refunds and credits for consumers in FY 2008/09. The Consumer Advocate provides consumer advocacy, education and outreach, intervenes in proceedings on behalf of consumers in the public interest, and provides legal support for the Division.

Cooperative Extension Division

The Cooperative Extension Service Division is a partnership between the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), the US Department of Agriculture, and the County. Extension Agents provide science-based educational programs in commercial agriculture and horticulture, home gardening and landscape maintenance, marine sciences, food safety and nutrition, and operate the 4-H youth development program. The Florida Yards and Neighborhoods program oversees the Landscape Irrigation Efficiency Program in support of the County's water conservation efforts. The Agricultural Manager develops strategies to maintain the viability of the agricultural industry.

Office of the Director

The Office of the Director provides policy direction, oversight, and centralized services such as personnel and information technology support. The office also houses shared positions that provide services throughout the department including collections and public information.

Consumer Services

TABLE OF ORGANIZATION

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

- Provides overall leadership, direction, administration, and coordination of departmental operations including personnel, finance, information technology system, purchasing, public information and collections

FY 08-09	FY 09-10
12	11

CONSUMER PROTECTION

- Licenses and regulates locksmith, towing, motor vehicle, moving, vehicle immobilization, motor vehicle repair technicians, title loan, and water re-metering industries; mediates consumer complaints; enforces consumer protection laws, registers telecommunication providers and issues domestic partnership certificates

FY 08-09	FY 09-10
35	35

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

- Provides education in commercial agriculture, home gardening, marine science, consumer and family science, resource management, family health, entrepreneurship, and 4-H youth opportunities
- Agricultural Manager provides economic analyses and information that support development in the agricultural community.

FY 08-09	FY 09-10
24	22

PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION REGULATION

- Regulates the for-hire industry and private/public ambulance providers; assures compliance with code requirements relating to ambulance service, non-emergency medical transportation, taxicabs, limousines, passenger motor carriers including jitneys, and Special Transportation Services (STS) carriers; performs vehicle inspections including private school buses; and conducts chauffeur training

FY 08-09	FY 09-10
53	45

Financial Summary

(dollars in thousands)	Actual FY 06-07	Budget FY 07-08	Adopted FY 08-09
Revenue Summary			
General Fund Countywide	2,322	2,045	1,035
Carryover	2,521	2,343	2,233
Code Fines / Lien Collections	1,137	826	856
Fees and Charges	7,227	6,432	7,876
Interest Earnings	27	0	0
Local Business Tax Receipt	471	471	471
Miscellaneous Non-Operating Revenue	0	0	405
Other Revenues	205	0	0
Interagency Transfers	159	187	441
Total Revenues	14,069	12,304	13,317
Operating Expenditures Summary			
Salary	6,444	7,295	7,307
Fringe Benefits	1,977	2,235	2,499
Other Operating	2,231	2,714	3,067
Capital	45	60	39
Total Operating Expenditures	10,697	12,304	12,912
Non-Operating Expenditures Summary			
Other Non-Operating Adjustments	0	0	405
Total Non-Operating Expenditures	0	0	405

(dollars in thousands) Expenditure By Program	Total Funding Budget FY 08-09	Total Funding Adopted FY 09-10	Total Positions Budget FY 08-09	Total Positions Adopted FY 09-10
Strategic Area: Transportation				
Administration	579	502	5	6
Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division	6,052	5,186	53	45
Strategic Area: Economic Development				
Administration	920	815	7	5
Consumer Protection - Cable TV Access Programming	0	0	0	0
Consumer Protection Division	4,048	3,779	35	35
Cooperative Extension Division	1,313	1,531	24	22
Total Operating Expenditures	12,912	11,813	124	113

Capital Budget Summary

N/A

Current Business Environment

The Consumer Services Department (CSD) provides countywide services without regard to municipality to a wide range of clientele. CSD's customers are consumers and businesses generally, as well as businesses and individuals that specifically fall under CSD regulatory programs. CSD works closely with the business community in each of the areas it regulates, related industries including the local hospitality and tourism sectors, retail establishments, individuals and entities involved in commercial agriculture, horticulture and aquaculture, municipalities, and other County departments.

CSD's organizational structure emphasizes direct services. On an annual basis, CSD issues approximately 20,000 licenses or permits, conducts 90,000 inspections or consultations, delivers training to 30,000 educational program attendees, and assists 20,000 office visitors, in addition to 145,000 contacts via telephone. CSD' website (www.miamidade.gov/csd) affords customers the ability to obtain information on their own and during non-traditional business hours. Popular downloads on the website are application forms and training schedules.

A new enterprise operating system launched in January 2008 has enhanced the ability of the department to process licenses, track complaints and field inspections, and manage data. Field access to data, remote entry of inspection results, work flow processing and electronic

ticketing is being phased into the new system. It is anticipated that licensing and complaint information will be available to the public via the Internet in early 2010.

CSD's focus on consumer dispute resolution continues to yield positive results in the monetary value of recoveries for consumers while providing a level playing field between businesses and contributing to a better quality of life. In FY 2009, $1.3 million was recovered to consumers as a result of the department's efforts. Outreach and education are important components of this effort.

Field enforcement related to generally applicable consumer protection laws has been eliminated as general funds supporting those efforts have been redirected to other County services due to the economic downturn. This shift away from general consumer protection has a detrimental impact on consumers at large. There is increasing demand for service from the department in its business-specific regulatory programs; however, revenues in these areas have also declined as a result of the economy at large and other factors. The demand for resources dedicated to regulated industries has increased and challenge the department's ability to keep up with demands.

CSD has two department appointed advisory groups dealing with the taxicab and limousine industries that meet on a quarterly basis. Opposing viewpoints exist between and within these industries on many policy issues. The Cooperative Extension Division works with program area advisory groups as well as an overall Extension Advisory Group that help the Division prioritize areas of service delivery.

CSD monitors state and federal legislation that may impact consumer protection laws or preempt our ability to regulate local businesses and battles state preemption challenges each legislative session. Continued efforts to preempt consumer protection and regulatory programs are expected to continue. These preemptions are detrimental to consumers because State agencies do not have local resources to monitor businesses and intervene on behalf of consumers. The department works closely with the County's intergovernmental staff in identifying and addressing preemptive challenges.

CSD collaborates with its South Florida consumer agency counterparts and meets with them on a bi-monthly basis. This collaboration also includes agencies in other geographic areas of Florida through the Florida Association of Consumer Protection Agencies. This network of agencies provides an opportunity to share ideas and common problems, respond to issues as a collective body, and explore standardization of various processes.

The CSD conducts customer feedback using a variety of measurement tools. The Feedback Plan consists of:

- Surveys – provided to businesses, consumers, and industry workgroups to solicit satisfaction with licensing, mediation, and other services. CSD seeks to obtain a rating of no less than four on a five point scale and consistently exceeds this target.
- Business Inspection Program – regulated businesses receive after the fact contacts to gauge the thoroughness of recent inspections and determine quality of inspection, employee conduct, and educational materials received.