Organizational Excellence

- Mission
- Vision
- Core Values
- Core Strategies
- Proposed Plan of Activities

Marathon County Mission Statement

Marathon County Government serves people by leading, coordinating, and providing county, regional, and statewide initiatives. It directly or in cooperation with other public and private partners provides services and creates opportunities that make Marathon County and the surrounding area a preferred place to live, work, visit, and do business.

Marathon County Vision Statement

Marathon County Government leads by providing high quality infrastructure and integrated services and by developing trusting, collaborative relationships among diverse partners. It is proactive in enhancing health and safety, protecting the environment, and providing cultural, recreational, and economic opportunities which make Marathon County and the surrounding area a preferred place to live, work, visit, and do business.

Core Values (details)

Service, Integrity, Quality, Diversity, Shared Purpose, Stewardship Of Our Resources.

(Top of page)

Core Strategies

I. Develop and implement organizational restructuring and processes for continuous improvement that enhance operational efficiency, improve customer service and service effectiveness, as measured by program outcomes, for key customers.
II. Establish and continually reevaluate service priorities. Proactively align current and future county services and programs with established priorities that anticipate needs, enhance health and safety, protect the environment and offer cultural, recreational, and economic opportunities.
III. Through leadership, infrastructure and resources, aggressively develop economic opportunities which provide for a strong economic base, equally balanced with protection of the environment and quality of life issues.
IV. Pursue local, regional, and state collaborative working relationships, public involvement and communication strategies which position Marathon County Government as a recognized leader in coordinating resources for the purpose of meeting community needs in Marathon County and the surrounding area.
V. Attract, develop, and retain staff capable of the leadership and vision necessary to provide excellent services. Educate and encourage public involvement in County Government, while developing the governance skills of elected officials.

Proposed Plan of Activities

Proposed Marathon County Plan of Activities by Core Strategy
FY 2006-2008
(Identified through the December Board retreat discussion)
(Additional Items Identified by Administration)

Core Strategy #I. *Develop and implement organizational restructuring and processes for continuous improvement that enhances operational efficiency, improves customer service and service effectiveness, as measured by program outcomes for key customers.*

1. Implement a customer satisfaction survey(s) which measures and monitors customer satisfaction with County services.
2. Restructure the County Board organization in order to foster successful accomplishment of the strategic initiatives.
3. Restructure the County operational units to be consistent with fostering effective and efficient services.
4. Establish a specific goal(s) for each department, to include predetermined measurable (expected) outcomes based upon normative data, and monitor outcomes with appropriate regularity.
5. Develop a set of (high level) key reports (a dashboard) germane to measuring the accomplishment of the County's strategic vision and continuously and appropriately monitor the same.

Core Strategy #II. *Establish and continually re-evaluate service priorities. Proactively align current and future County services and programs with established priorities that anticipate needs, enhance health and safety, protect the environment and offer cultural, recreational, and economic opportunities.*

1. Develop and implement a process which uses stakeholder focused criteria to identify the least effective (10% of) programs and services provided by the County, and propose approaches to improve and/or discontinue each.
2. Increase organizational productivity (by 2%) based upon a predetermined criteria e.g., cost per unit of service, FTE. recidivism.
3. Design and implement a public input system which increases community involvement in County Government.
4. Conduct (a minimum of six annually) educational sessions for the Board to develop a better understanding of future challenges and effective governance.
5. Complete a study to determine the most effective means of approaching future criminal justice issues.
6. Conduct NCHCF study to determine the most viable options for the County to move forward with policy decisions related to elderly and individuals with disabilities.

Core Strategy #III. *Through leadership, infrastructure and resources, aggressively develop economic opportunities which provide for a strong economic base, balanced with protection of the environment and quality of life issues.*

1. Through county board reorganization, structure a county board committee(s) with the responsibility for the development and leadership of the county's economic development strategies
2. Complete a futuristic infrastructure needs analysis for Marathon County and the region as a precursor to establishing future economic development initiatives by the County.
3. Participate in and support the regional planning organization(s) implementation of the County's strategic partnership initiatives.
4. Building upon the counties historically strong agriculture economy, foster the development of agriculture initiatives e.g. the Dairyland State Academy and work in partnership with other community organizations to encourage agriculture development.
5. *Research and develop model ordinances and other tools to help communities be successful in implementing the land use element of their respective comprehensive plans.*
6. *Continue to work with our municipalities to assist them in developing policies and practices that are consistent with and support respective visions of the future.*
7. *Analyze implications, and initiate actions to retain the viability of the CentralWisconsinAirport.*
8. *Develop a long term facilities' plan for the UWMC.*

Core Strategy #IV. *Pursue local, regional, and state collaborative working relationships, public involvement and communication strategies which position Marathon County Government as a recognized leader in coordinating resources for the purpose of meeting community needs in Marathon County and the surrounding area.*

1. Complete the implementation of a regional ADRC.
2. Propose a regional long term care CMO (Community Care of Central Wisconsin) initiative in cooperation with Portage and Wood Counties.
3. Lead a regional information/ communications system development initiative e.g., emergency services.
4. Partner with North Central Regional Planning to formulate proposals to regionalize appropriate initiatives.
5. Develop a consumer (citizen) focused County website.
6. Develop and implement an improved public information/ media relations program.
7. *Establish a series of public presentations to the community fostering communications about the County's mission, vision, and accomplishment of the same, engaging the CountyBoard membership in these activities.*

Core Strategy #V. *Attract, develop and retain staff capable of the leadership and vision necessary to provide excellent services. Educate and encourage public involvement in County Government, while developing the governance skills of elected officials.*

1. Provide governance education sessions for the County Board.
2. Craft and implement staff development policies and practices focused on the successful completion of the core strategies.
3. Develop an improved Board and employee orientation process/ program.

4. Implement an ongoing employee satisfaction survey process focused on engaging the employee as a means to make Marathon County a preferred employer.
5. Develop a leadership succession plan for Administration.
6. Conduct an organization-wide communications/in-service initiative to incorporate an understanding of the mission, vision and core strategies in the daily work of every employee.
7. *Study a compensation philosophy/plan which links compensation to employee performance.*
8. Design and promote leadership development opportunities for the board and administration.

(Top of page)

Marathon County Board of Supervisors
Core Values

The Marathon County Board of Supervisors adopted six core values—service, integrity, quality, diversity, shared purpose, and stewardship of resources--in February, 2004 to communicate how our County will conduct its business. The role of the Marathon County Board of Supervisors is to lead our staff in becoming the best County in the State of Wisconsin. To do this, we commit to living the six core values as outlined below:

SERVICE is responsively delivering on our commitments to all of our internal and external customers. County Board members will provide leadership in **SERVICE** by:

- Doing the job we were elected to do focusing on the needs of the whole County and on the needs of our constituents.
- Establishing appropriate timelines for all County Board activities consistent with excellent customer service.
- Allocating resources to assure our employees are capable of providing excellent customer service.
- Directing that administration establish and monitor customer service metrics for all County departments.

INTEGRITY is honesty, openness, and demonstrating mutual respect and trust in others. County Board members will provide leadership in **INTEGRITY** by:

- Establishing an expectation and practice that County Board Supervisors and administration will refer to and treat each other, employees, other levels of government, and the public with respect.
- Making decisions that are in the best interests of the County's residents.
- Conducting oneself in a manner that reflects well upon the reputation of Marathon County.
- Upholding high ethical standards, including declaring conflicts of interest when they arise and removing ourselves from the decision making process in such cases.

QUALITY is providing public services that are reflective of "best practices" in the field. County Board members will provide leadership in **QUALITY** by:

- Gathering and using information to make decisions focused on the best future for the citizens of Marathon County.
- Supporting and expecting County employees to create an environment of continuous quality improvement.
- Directing that administration establish benchmarks for success and monitor County services against these benchmarks.
- Creating a work environment that makes Marathon County a preferred employer as

evidenced by excellent employee recruitment and retention, performance, staff development, and positive union and management relations.

DIVERSITY is actively welcoming and valuing people with different perspectives and experiences. County Board members will provide leadership in **DIVERSITY** by:

- Welcoming and respecting persons of all cultures and backgrounds.
- Listening to and valuing the opinions of all constituents.
- Refraining from making statements or decisions that demeans any group**.**
- Encouraging the sharing of diverse opinions.
- Ensuring minority representation/participation appropriate to County Board issues.

SHARED PURPOSE is functioning as a team to attain our organizational goals and working collaboratively with our policy makers, departments, employees, and customers. County Board members will provide leadership in **SHARED PURPOSE** by:

- Recognizing we are in partnership with all County employees, citizens, elected officials, and contracted service providers to achieve our goals.
- Conducting strategic planning to align County Government on its mission and future vision for success.
- Defining short-term and long-term goals and focusing on outcomes to maximize benefits to Marathon County residents.
- Working appropriately with all parties when disputes arise to find workable solutions.

STEWARDSHIP OF OUR RESOURCES is conserving the human, natural, cultural, and financial resources for current and future generations. County Board members will provide leadership in **STEWARDSHIP** by:

- Making policy decisions that value and protect the human, natural, cultural, and financial resources and infrastructure of Marathon County.
- Being futuristic when we discuss and set goals.
- Expecting that all County Departments and employees will use state of the art, best practices in delivering services to the public.
- Evaluating and monitoring standards which assure the effective and efficient use of County resources.

Close this window

The county board: providing leadership through strategic planning

Kenneth Day, Marathon County Board Supervisor & Brad Karger, Marathon County Assistant Administrator

Why should a county spend time doing strategic planning, especially during this time of uncertainty?

That was the question on the lips and in the minds of some members of the Marathon County Board of Supervisors when the topic of strategic planning was discussed in late 2004 by the administration, department heads and the board itself. What could be the benefit of completing a strategic plan? After all, the board had reviewed and revised its mission statement two years earlier. Based on that review, the board created and implemented a process as a means of prioritizing, and then reducing, the county's expenditures. Overall, Marathon County's financial health was excellent. In addition, the local economy was growing and Marathon County was identified as one of only two locations in the state that was retaining a larger number of college graduates than it was losing. The county had implemented a smart-growth planning project and most of the local municipalities were participating. Then why would the county government want to spend the time, money and effort necessary to perform a comprehensive strategic plan?

The answer to the question why became apparent when the board began to explore its future.

As a result of a presentation provided by WCA Executive Director Mark O'Connell and an initial environmental scan conducted by the board, the board was motivated to move forward with strategic planning because of the certain and uncertain aspects of Marathon County's future.

The uncertainty of future state funding was a concern of the board. While county finances are good at present, no one expected that monetary resources would be as plentiful in the future. It was clear that while the county had made some program modifications and reduced expenditures, additional program reductions and establishment of funding priorities would be required. The board determined that the use of specific, objective criteria as rationale to discontinue or modify programs in the future was necessary in order to convince employees, special interest groups and the public that board decisions were not arbitrary.

Additionally, it was increasingly clear that the public would require greater accountability from local government, demanding to know what taxpayers would be getting for their expenditures. The public required to know why one service might be discontinued while another would be expanded. The board determined that in order to effectively prioritize ser-

vices, greater clarity and alignment of the county's mission would need to be established and then clearly communicated to county employees and residents.

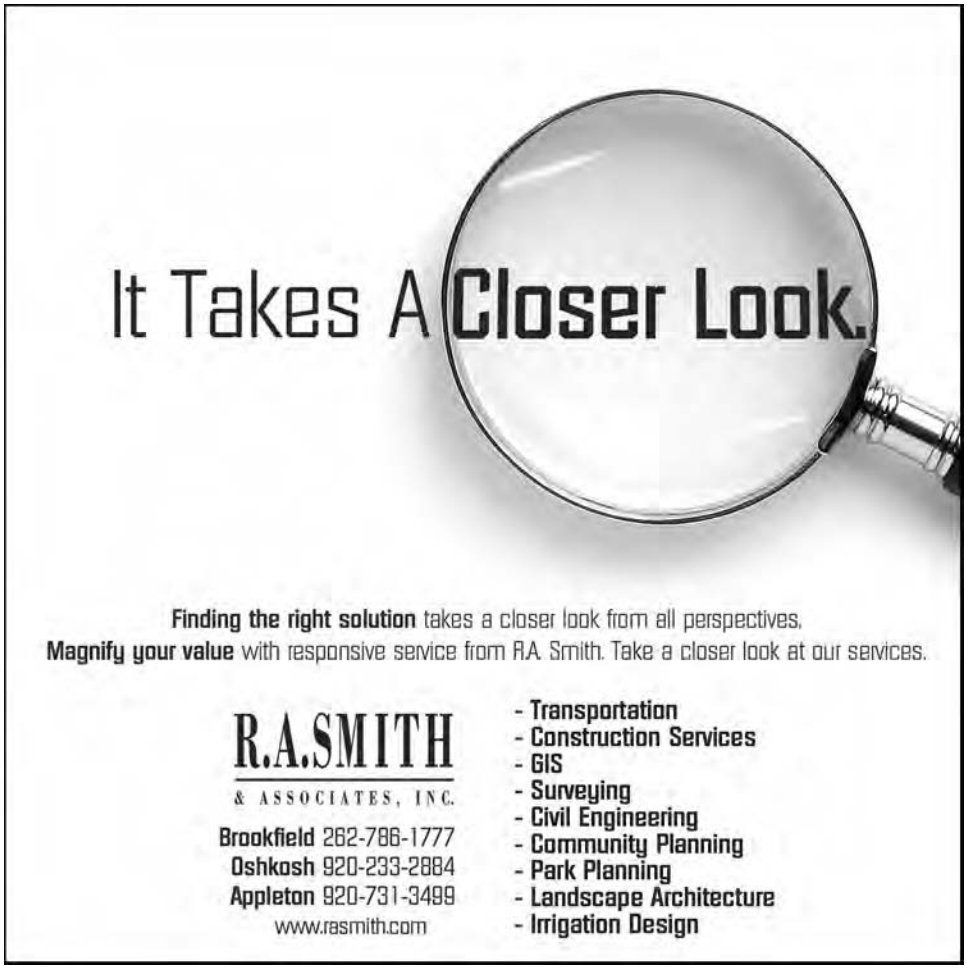
The board was concerned with other issues as well. The number of individuals 65 and older was projected to become greater than 20 percent of the counties population. The sprawl of business into rural areas was beginning to demand attention if the rural character of the county, which is what attracted residents and what residents value, was to be maintained. Locally-owned businesses, which had grown and prospered in the county, were transitioning to absentee ownership by large corporations outside the community, and leadership for future economic development would be required to replace jobs eliminated by changes in the workplace. Finally, the ability to attract and retain a vibrant, quality workforce for the region and for Marathon County government positions would be a challenge in an increasingly competitive business environment. Because of these challenges, the board recognized that if the county organization were to live by its recently adopted core value statements, which stressed continuous improvement, changes in how the county organization was structured and how it would conduct its business in the future were necessary.

Given the challenges confronting the county, the board decided it must take a leadership role in determining the county's future. It needed to provide direction to its administrative staff and hold them accountable for outcomes. It needed to establish program and funding priorities, and criteria for success which it could use to measure and monitor performance. Finally, the board needed to establish priorities for its own work to identify those critical issues the organization must address so that the county could deliver the services valued by Marathon County residents. Establishing and implementing a comprehensive strategic plan for the county, rather than reacting in a haphazard way to rising crisis, was the method by which the board determined it could best provide leadership for the organization.

With a sense of accomplishment about the past and the current successes of Marathon County, and with a realization that the future held challenges and uncertainties, the board agreed to move forward with a strategic planning process in February of 2005. An outline of the planning process was included in a resolution approving the strategic planning process and the specifics of that process were developed by a strategic planning committee appointed by the board in a subsequent resolution.

What can strategic planning accomplish?

Strategic planning can identify and clarify a county's mission, vision for success, critical issues and the core strategies to address



each. This is critical in identifying the opportunities available to move a county organization forward productively and efficiently in a rapidly changing environment. Organizational alignment creates an organization-wide team focus and assists the organization in attracting and retaining the talented employees necessary to make a county a leadership organization. Strategically thinking about a county's future and establishing goals for the future helps the organization prioritize its work and establish specific criteria against which it can assess its own performance and the performance of administrative staff.

Is Strategic Planning Difficult?

Strategic planning processes and their results vary from organization to organization. The worst-case scenarios range from a superficial discussion by a board revisiting a draft mission statement provided by administration, to a drawn out process with extensive data which overburdens a board and results in a 300 page, 3-ring binder report accepted by a board and then shelved, never to be implemented.

The key to an effective strategic planning process is to establish a set of activities and a schedule which affords gathering sufficient insight about future issues relevant to the organization, and which is succinct in design so that the board and the organization are not overloaded with minutia. While each strategic planning process needs to be designed to address the uniqueness of the organization, steps in a traditional strategic planning process include: an environmental scan, clarification and alignment on a mission statement, creation of a vision statement, a description of what future success looks like, identification of critical issues (those issues which must be addressed by the organization in order for the desired future vision to be obtained), and a set of core strategies to be used by the organization to address the critical issues.

The design for Marathon County's strategic planning process was lead by a strategic planning committee. This committee was to guide the process and involve the board, county administration, county management and the community when it was appropriate. The committee consisted of 10 individuals– a cross-section of board members, non-elected citizens, county administrators and department heads.

The process was designed to be completed over a period of six months with a draft plan presented to the board for consideration and adoption after the six months. The plan document was to include the elements outlined above. The planning process would necessitate approximately 10 hours of full board discussion during those six months. It would also include an undefined amount of additional time for community focus groups, strategic planning committee meetings and administrative and management discussion. The strategic planning committee enlisted the assistance of a consulting firm to assist with internal, external and board group discussion and facilitation.

Why is strategic planning so important?

The strategic planning process is as valuable as the plan that it generates. It is through the process of discovery and disclosure that the organization identifies hidden and long-held values, beliefs and practices which may adversely affect its ability to function efficiently, change and improve services to the community. It is through this process of discovery and alignment that groups of people in the organization come together to discuss how the organization could improve. Through this process, the organization develops a clearer understanding of why it exists and what results are valuable. It can begin to identify what accountability to its stakeholders might look like. The process makes it acceptable to re-evaluate and challenge past practices– not by defining them as "wrong" in the past, but by assessing their value in moving into the future.

Marathon County has successfully completed its strategic planning process for a three-year to five-year time horizon. The board completed its final discussion of the plan and adopted it as a holiday gift to the organization on

December 20th, 2005. Further, the board moved with deliberate speed into the implementation phase of the plan. The board requested that administration begin the development of specific actions to bring the goals of the strategic plan to fruition. These annual action plans will become part of the administrative staff's duties and will describe the actions that need to be taken by all areas of the organization in order for the vision of success to become a reality. The board will provide the leadership required for the implementation of these plans, establish criteria for evaluating success and monitor the organization's performance against the goals established in the plans. Perhaps most importantly, the board will allocate available resources consistent with the core strategies.

Strategic planning is not just an event, it is a process through which the organization can develop internal and external alignment on why it exists, what it wants to be and how it will serve in the future. It can identify the most significant challenges faced by a county, and how the organization intends to move into the future. It has the potential of aligning the work of the entire organization, thereby making it more effective and efficient. If these seem like results that would be of value to your county's organization, then perhaps a strategic planning process should be in your county's future.

Kenneth Day is a Marathon County board supervisor with extensive professional experience in strategic planning. Ken chaired the Marathon County strategic planning committee. He has served on the boards of several community organizations and assisted many others with their strategic planning. Ken led the planning, business development and marketing division of a major healthcare system for the past 20 years. For specific information about Marathon County's strategic plan or its planning process, Ken can be contacted at 715.675.3531 or <KLDay1@charter.net>.

Brad Karger is the Marathon County assistant administrator and chief operating officer. Brad has 25 years of leadership experience in the public sector with extensive experience in the area of human resources. Improvement of organization performance, staff development and increased accountability for outcomes are his key areas of interest. Brad can be contacted at 715.261.1404 or <bmkarger@mail.co.marathon.wi.us>.

TheCompanyYouKnow. TheExpertsYouTrust.

CODE

www.generalcode.com

©2003 General Code Publishers

CODIFICATION SERVICES DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS