

Jefferson County Government Strategic Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategic planning is defined as “a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does and why it does it.” The strategic planning process is a powerful approach for helping organizations figure out what is really important and what they should do about it. The strategic planning process helps organizations look at “the big picture”, but also leads to specific, targeted actions.

A strategic plan focuses on organizational dynamics, and typically identifies two to four strategic issues (or fundamental challenges to organizational effectiveness). A strategic plan provides a strategy or action framework to address the specific strategic issues.

The strategic planning process used for the Jefferson County Government Strategic Plan is based on the approach developed by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Strategic Planning Team. The process includes these specific steps:

- Planning the process and stakeholder analysis (Section 1)
- Assessing formal and informal mandates (Section 2)
- Determining core values and the mission of the organization (Section 3)
- Assessing the internal and external environment of the organization (Section 4)
- Identifying strategic issues and the vision of success for the organization (Section 5)
- Formulating strategies and an action agenda (Section 6)
- Reviewing and adopting the strategic plan, implementation activity and reassessment of the plan (Section 7- plan management steps)

Section 1- Stakeholder Analysis

The Steering Committee performed a Stakeholder Analysis in which those individuals or groups that are affected by or affect County government were identified. Over 50 external stakeholders (outside of the County government) were identified. The Steering Committee identified 12 internal stakeholders. These stakeholder groups were organized by “primary stakeholders” and “secondary stakeholders” to help figure out which stakeholders might warrant extra attention for this cycle of planning.

Primary stakeholders groups identified by the Steering Committee include:

- ❖ Employees and Union-Internal
- ❖ Clients of our Departments/Customers of Our Services-Internal and External
- ❖ Future Generations-External
- ❖ Businesses (Present and Future)-External
- ❖ People of the County-Internal and External

The Steering Committee then developed performance criteria for these stakeholder groups. This exercise helped the planning team think about the criteria that stakeholders might use to judge the performance of County government.

Section 2- Formal and Informal Mandates

The Steering Committee identified, generalized and characterized important “formal” or codified mandates. These “organizational musts” were organized around County departments or

functions. The Committee used their experience to note these required activities. The Steering Committee also identified “informal” mandates which are those County activities that, over time, have become expected from stakeholders. The Steering Committee then shared perspectives on how they viewed the implications of formal and informal mandates for future County direction.

Section 3- Values and Mission Statement

Core Values:

The Steering Committee generated a list of 37 “core values” in responding to these questions:

- What do we really care about in relating to key stakeholders?
- What is our philosophy as to how we would like to be viewed?
- What are the values that we should have that help indicate how Jefferson County wants to operate?

The Steering Committee identified three broad value categories and seven individual values that they would like to emphasize. These County government values are:

Service:

Respect: We respect others and people we come in contact with (including future generations); the “Golden Rule” extended over time.

Transparency: We need to abide by open meetings laws, welcome public input and be as open as possible.

Honesty: We will assess cost and value accurately, holistically and honestly

Responsibility: We have equal and binding responsibility for our many rights. We are responsible for ourselves, our nation, our world and future generations.

Stewardship:

Trust and Stewardship: We need to be wise stewards of what has been entrusted to us. (financial, timeliness, people resources, natural resources, etc.). We are stewards of things that are entrusted to us (such as buildings, facilities, equipment, land, vehicles, etc.)

Accountability: We have to be accountable for what we are striving to do; we should have explanations but not excuses.

Skills:

Competence: Exercise responsibility in doing my job and having the necessary skill-set.

Professionalism and Efficiency: When we deal with the public we handle it in both a professional and quick manner. We will get the answer right away or get them to the right place.

Innovation: We are willing to approach things differently than they have been done before; get beyond “that’s the way we have always done it.”

Mission Statement:

The Steering Committee also was asked to respond to these questions about County government’s purpose or mission:

- ❖ What is our fundamental purpose as a County government organization?
- ❖ What are we here to do?
- ❖ What are the basic social and community needs that we address?

This resulted in 17 potential Mission Statements. The Steering Committee went through several sessions and multiple exercises to refine its Mission Statement. Subsequently, a Mission Statement for Jefferson County government was approved.

Jefferson County Mission Statement:

“To fulfill County government’s responsibilities to its citizens and advance the quality of life in Jefferson County.”

There was interest in developing a shorter version of the mission for use in various County communication pieces. A Motto for Jefferson County government was approved.

Jefferson County Motto:

“Jefferson County: Responsible government advancing quality of life.”

Section 4- Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Challenges (S.W.O.C.) Analysis

The participants responded to these four elements to help clarify the condition of the organization (Jefferson County government). The strengths and weakness look at the past and present, and are assessments of the internal organization. The challenges and opportunities/hopes look into the future. The S.W.O.C. analysis supplies an overall systems view of the organization, and it brings to the surface clues for identifying key strategic issues and the contours of effective strategies. The opportunities and hopes exercise provides an early foundation for Jefferson County vision statements, and were grouped by “physical ideas” (those described for the physical setting of the County) and by “organizational ideas” (those relating to County government as an organization).

The input was further organized into theme or possible preliminary issue areas. The Steering Committee identified many strengths in the operation of Jefferson County government. The assessment also revealed an honest effort at identifying weaknesses. External challenges or outside factors that could negatively affect the County were also listed. There were varying degrees of agreement and disagreement from the strengths, weaknesses and challenges assessment. Since the “Opportunities and Hopes” section was intended to prompt the future “vision of success” for both the setting of Jefferson County and County government, there was an effort to gauge consensus among the members of the Steering Committee.

The significant assessment work in Section 4 significantly informed the development of possible issues in Section 5. In addition, the results from the “Opportunities and Hopes” became the basis for the Consensus Vision Statements in Section 5.

Section 5- Issues and Vision

The Steering Committee generated a list of 16 issues based on what they believed were some of the fundamental challenges facing Jefferson County. They initiated extensive dialogue sessions to help characterize the essence of the issue or dilemma. The Steering Committee members also provided “explanations” as to why they thought each issue was important to address. Subsequently, each issue was framed as an open-ended question with many ways of responding. Through consensus, the list of potential issues was narrowed to seven issues facing Jefferson County government.

Issues:

Issue A. Education and Communication: How can County government educate both the public and its own internal stakeholders about its mission and services?

Issue B. Financial/Internal: What are the appropriate levels of spending and sources of revenue in County Government?

Issue C. Partnerships/Cooperation: How can we foster cooperation with other governmental bodies and groups, and promote public and private philanthropy?

Issue D. Environmental/Economic/Cultural: How do we protect and preserve our environmental and cultural heritage, and become energy secure while encouraging and supporting sustainable economic activity?

Issue E. Public Services/Quality: How do we decide what services we should provide and at what level while responding to quality, quantity and return on investment?

Issue F. Decision Making/Techniques: How can we make educated decisions about programs and services based on best practice models, methods and techniques?

Issue G. Organizational Structure: How can we restructure County government to meet the service needs/priorities of County residents within public funding levels?

Determining the Strategic Issues:

The Steering Committee selected three strategic issues (representing the most important or fundamental of issues) based on a review of the results from a Decision Matrix tool, findings from a citizen opinion survey, and dialogue around the impacts of issues on the future of County government.

The Committee observed that addressing these three strategic issues would also help make progress on the other four issues because of interrelationships. The Committee did not want to rank these strategic issues separately but instead rated all three as the strategic issues to further address in the strategy formulation phase.

Strategic Issue 1. Education and Communication: How can County government educate both the public and its own internal stakeholders about its mission and services?

Strategic Issue 2. Environmental/Economic/Cultural: How do we protect and preserve our environmental and cultural heritage, and become energy secure while encouraging and supporting sustainable economic activity?

Strategic Issue 3. Public Services/Quality: How do we decide what services we should provide and at what level while responding to quality, quantity and return on investment?

Vision:

The consensus vision statements are based on the identification of opportunities and hopes for the future. A vision statement is a “description of a desired end-state” or a “description of what is desired to be in place at a future point in time”. The Final Plan contains a detailed vision of

success for Jefferson County government. Shown below is a selection of five prominent vision statements that were tested in the citizen survey.

Jefferson County will:

- Be known for its strong agricultural economy and farmland preservation.
- Attract new businesses and grow existing businesses because it becomes known as a place with a high quality of life, attractive business sectors and high functioning County government.
- Be our “home place” of nice small towns with proximity to urban areas, but retain our rich and diverse base of assets.
- Maintain and improve our environment that supports a healthy lifestyle and healthy living.
- Become the center of the Glacial Heritage Area and be known for its recreational opportunities.

Section 6- Strategy Formulation

The purpose of this step is to create a set of strategies to address the three priority strategic issues that have been selected. A strategy is defined as a pattern of purposes, policies, programs, projects, or actions initiated by the organization. Strategies respond to the challenges and open-ended question from each strategic issue.

Strategic Issue 1. Education and Communication: How can County government educate both the public and its own internal stakeholders about its mission and services?

MAJOR STRATEGY INITIATIVES FOR EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION:

1. Staff/Resources - Commit staff and resources to education and communication about County Government.

2. Education/Schools - Integrate County Government matters into existing school curriculum.

3. County Government Strategic Plan - Communicate and educate about the content and direction of County Government based on the County Strategic Plan.

4. Best Practice and Marketing Research - Use expertise of UW Whitewater faculty and/or others in developing a communication system that is based in sound practice and methods.

5. Media - Package a variety of multi-media communication methods such as films, videos, technology assisted mechanisms, web-site updates, print and other innovative methods.

Strategic Issue 2. Environmental/Economic/Cultural: How do we protect and preserve our environmental and cultural heritage, and become energy secure while encouraging and supporting sustainable economic activity?

MAJOR STRATEGY INITIATIVES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL:

1. County and Community Projects - Integrate real County (and community projects) into implementation programs in order to demonstrate County commitment to this issue.

2. Sustainability Task Force - Use the “charge” of the Sustainability Task Force as a way to move forward individual projects (see Major Strategy Initiative 1. above) and other ideas -- including the development of a “County Energy Plan”.

3. Partnerships and Relationships - Build on relationships with our large employers and other communities/municipalities to advance this issue (including Trek, Fort Health Care, Standard Process, Custom Shop, Nestle's, Cities of Jefferson, Watertown, Waterloo, others) .

4. Other Vision Documents, Plans and Transportation Planning - Use the vision ideas from the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan Update (with Economic Development Emphasis), and follow-up with a rigorous transportation plan.

5. Cultural Heritage - Build on our established cultural heritage and long term values.

Strategic Issue 3. Public Services/Quality: How do we decide what services we should provide and at what level while responding to quality, quantity and return on investment?

MAJOR STRATEGY INITIATIVES FOR PUBLIC SERVICES/QUALITY:

1. Understanding about County Government - Determine and develop the foundational understanding about the importance and role of County government.

2. Mandates Interpretation and Public Good - Determine County services that are essential for quality of life, environmental stewardship, economic development and the public good, but are not necessarily formally mandated.

3. County Department and County Committees - Advance the response to service provision and quality through the work of individual County departments and policy committees.

Section 7- Plan Management

The Steering Committee concluded the strategic planning process by acting on the important plan management steps as they transitioned from “planning” to “management of the plan”. The Committee identified the desired protocol for plan review in order for Jefferson County to reach the organizational approvals necessary to proceed with the plan. The Steering Committee approved this Jefferson County Strategic Plan unanimously.

This section also includes the Steering Committee's guidance for the “Plan Implementation Step”. The plan implementation process step provides the direction as to how the adopted strategic plan will be incorporated into relevant County government organizational systems. The Committee chose to empower various implementation bodies to provide additional detail on the specific actions beyond those major strategy initiatives developed in the strategy formulation section. The Steering Committee identified those key implementation bodies, including County policy committees and departments that will be critical leaders of plan implementation.

And finally, this section describes the Steering Committee's direction for the last step of a strategic planning process which is “Plan Reassessment”. The purpose of this step is to periodically reassess the effectiveness of the strategies as they are being implemented. This involves periodic monitoring and oversight of the plan, strategy evaluation and consideration of timing for doing a new round of strategic planning. The County's Administration and Rules Committee will provide plan oversight and a plan update should be considered in two or three years.