



LEGISLATING FOR RESULTS: *Using Outcome Information in Strategic and Program Planning*

A Municipal Action Guide

Number 3 of 10

Good long-range planning is important to successful government. Planning needs relevant and detailed information. This Guide provides suggestions for strengthening long range planning by assuring that the plans focus on the results your community needs.

Strategic planning is an important activity for elected officials to consider for the future development of the

community. Elected officials should periodically consider where the community wants to be over the next several years and develop a multi-year plan for achieving it. This type of planning can be considerably more valid and useful if it starts with baseline data for the outcomes being sought, provides the target values for the outcomes sought over the planning period, and provides annual outcome targets to track progress towards the plan.

Summary of Actions

- Prepare a multi-year plan for the community periodically. Identify a set of key outcome-focused objectives for the community recognizing the major issues of importance to citizens and business.
- Identify key outcome indicators that can be used to track progress towards strategic objectives.
- Obtain the current values for each of the outcome indicators that will form the baseline from which you can later assess progress towards the objectives.
- Select realistic target values for each key outcome indicator and for each year of the plan.
- Examine the progress being made towards the long-term objectives annually. Ask agencies to discuss in their budget requests how the objectives identified in the requests relate to the goals.
- Use the information on agency program objectives and outcomes to regularly identify cross-cutting services/programs and consider the need for coordination and consolidation.
- Report on this progress in annual reports to citizens.

ACTIONS

Need for results information for long-run strategic planning. Basic components of any strategic plan include baseline information on key community conditions and estimates of the outcomes sought from the long-term strategy.

ACTION: Sponsor preparation of a multi-year plan for the community. Typically, such plans cover four or five years into the future. The council should take the lead role and include citizens and businesses in the process. The plan should be adopted as a council resolution.

ACTION: Identify specific strategic community objectives for the community that recognize the major issues of importance to citizens and business. The key objectives should be based in part on a needs assessment of the community.

ACTION: Identify key outcome indicators that can track progress towards your strategic objectives.

ACTION: Request staff to provide the current values for each of the outcome indicators. These values form the baseline that you can later use to measure progress towards the objectives.

ACTION: Select target values for each year of the plan for each key outcome indicator, including the final year. The annual targets should lead to the outcomes the council is seeking for the plan. (*See Examples from Prince William, VA and Coral Springs, FL under "Strategic Plans with Targets" below*)

ACTION: Work with senior staff to develop strategies for addressing your priorities and to estimate the future need in the community.

ACTION: Ask staff to estimate for each strategy option the outcomes, cost, and feasibility to assist in selecting the most desirable alternative. (See *Examples from Prince William County under “Comparison of Alternatives” below*)

ACTION: Use the information on agency program objectives and outcome indicators to annually identify cross-cutting services/programs and consider the need for coordination and consolidation.

ACTION: Ask when major overruns are not expected until after the budget year, request that department to provide future-year estimates for each outcome indicator in their budget request. This information is especially likely to be useful in helping the council assess proposed investment projects.

ACTION: Ask for annual reports to elected officials and citizens on the progress towards the community’s objectives. (See *Examples from Coral Springs, FL under “State of the City Reports” below*)

Need to link strategic plan objectives to those in annual budgets and department plans. Multi-year plans have little use unless they are linked to annual actions towards the planned

accomplishments. Governments that have a long-range strategic plan need to track progress towards the targets specified in the plan.

ACTION: Request that departments describe in their budget requests how the activities and outcome targets identified in their requests relate to the targets in the strategic plan.

ACTION: Ask staff to identify where gaps are occurring in meeting the targets in the strategic plan and the reasons for these gaps.

ACTION: Ask staff, as part of the budget review process, to report on the extent to which the funding requested will be sufficient to provide the services necessary to meet the targets in your strategic plan.

ACTION: When major outcomes are not expected until after the budget year, request that departments provide future-year estimates for each outcome indicator in their budget requests.

EXAMPLES

Strategic Plans with Targets

Prince William County, Virginia

The Prince William, VA County Code calls for a strategic plan to be adopted by the Board during the board’s term. It also calls for annual updating of the plan. For each major service area, the plan includes specific outcome indicators with target values. Examples include:

- An average litter rating for roads of 1.5 on a scale of 0-5, with “0” meaning no visible trash) a “community development” goal
- Adding 4,440 new jobs – an “economic development” goal
- Improvement of the percent of fire and emergency rescue responses within specified numbers of minutes by four percentage points (with the specific targeted response time depending on whether the location was

in high, medium, or low density areas) – a “public safety” goal.¹

Coral Springs, Florida

The City of Coral Springs, FL develops a strategic plan every two years. Commissioners work collaboratively with city staff to affirm or revise the mission statement, identify strategic priorities, and select Key Intended Outcomes for each priority area. The Strategic Plan that is adopted by the Commission includes specific two-year target values for the Key Intended Outcomes. Examples include:

- 65% of code cases brought into voluntary compliance prior to administrative/judicial process (in the neighborhood and environmental vitality priority area);
- No more than 155 accidents per year at 16 major intersections (in the neighborhood and environmental vitality priority area);

¹ Prince William County, Virginia, “2004-2008 Strategic Plan Update,” available on the county’s web site.

² Prince William County, Virginia, power point, “Fire Protection Fees,” Fire Marshall Kevin McGee, April 18, 2006 presentation to Board of Supervisors.

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- 80% of minority residents in City survey feel that the City is a great place to live (unity in the community priority area); and
- 92% overall quality rating for City services and programs from City survey (customer-involved government priority area).³

Comparison of Alternatives

Prince William County, Virginia (2)

The Prince William County VA Board of Supervisors used the table shown in Attachment 3-1 (from the County Fire Marshall's Office), to make its budget decisions about the added fire code inspectors and contractor fees. The table

compares information on a number of outcome indicators, including: inspection delay times (of considerable concern to building contractors); customer satisfaction; code compliance (a proxy for occupant safety); and cost recovery.²

Table 1: Example of Systematic Comparison of Alternatives

	A	B	C	D
Supports Economic Development	Yes	Yes	No	No
Supports Public Safety Goal	Yes	Partially, but more than C	Partially	No
FTEs Supported Existing/FY07/0	4/5/4 Total: 13 by FY 08	3/3/3 Total: 9 by FY 08	0/1.5/0 Total: 1.5 by FY 08	0/0/0
Revenue Projection	\$2,252,500	\$2,002,500	\$2,500,000	\$0
Requires BOCS Action	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Allowed by Fire Code	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Cost Recovery	Full	Development - Full Permits - No	Development - No Permits - Full	No

State of City Reports

Coral Springs Florida (2)

The Coral Springs, FL annual "State of the City" report from the council and city manager includes a "Performance Measures" section for each strategic priority area identified in the Strategic Plan. Data on the most recent values for each

key intended outcome are provided, along with the two-year target for the indicator. The report is posted on the city's website and mailed to all residential and commercial addresses in the City.⁴

Table 2: Systematic Comparison of Alternatives

	A	B	C	D
Life Safety Code	Increases	Increases, then declines	Declines	Declines
Customer Satisfaction	High	Development: High Permits: Poor	Poor, and will declines	Poor
Customer Acceptance of Fees	Development: High Permits: Variable	High	Variable	N/A
Scalable	Yes, indefinitely	Yes, in short run	No	No
Next Day inspections	96%	~89%	~70% w/ decline	~65% w/ rapid decline
FY 07 Inspections	Development: 10,000 Permits: 1,000	Development: 10,000 Permits: 400	Development: 6,500 Permits: 1,000	Development: 6,500 Permits: 400

³ City of Coral Springs, Florida, "Strategic Plan: Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006," available on the city's web site.

⁴ E-mail communication from Kevin Knutson, Director of Communications & Marketing (formerly Budget Director), City of Coral Springs (June 2, 2006).

