



2020

Strategic Plan Fresno County Department of Social Services

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Introduction

In March of 2020, McIntyre-St. Clair was retained by the Fresno County Department of Social Services to complete a current strategic planning process for the department. The department's most recent strategic plan was completed in 2018 and is set to expire at the end of 2020. That plan, viewed as a successfully executed effort, set the stage for creation of a new plan through the end of 2023.

The planning process was completed under challenging circumstances. Before the process commenced, California, as most of the nation, was plunged into severe restrictions on travel, gathering, and social contact in response to the emergence of COVID-19 (the coronavirus) as a global pandemic. As this plan is completed California remains under these restrictions, with no definitive return to normal activities on the horizon. The consulting team, in collaboration with department leadership, immediately pivoted to completing the project using remote engagement techniques. The process is described in more detail in a subsequent section of this report.

The planning process was also complicated by a major wildfire impacting Fresno County and the operations of the department. The Creek Fire impacted clients and employees of the department. Significant department operations were redirected to operating centers for residents displaced by the fire. This natural disaster further delayed completion of the planning process. The planning process, originally scheduled for completion at the end of October 2020, was extended through December 2020.

Strategic Context

Strategic context describes the circumstances in which the planning organization carries out its mission. The Fresno County Department of Social Services serves an area of high need as compared to the California in general. Fresno County is characterized by higher levels of poverty and unemployment.

Income

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Unemployment

Rates of unemployment varied widely from 2019 to the start of the pandemic, and to the current time. The estimated unemployment rate in Fresno County was at a low of 5.6% in September of 2019 and spiked to a high of 16.9% in April of 2020 just after pandemic-related stay-at-home orders were issued. By August 2020, the unemployment rate had reduced to 10.3% (fred.stlouisfed.org). By contrast the State of California unemployment rates remained lower during the same period. The September 2019 statewide unemployment rate was 3.9%. The statewide rate peaked at 16.4% in April 2020 and stands now at 9.3% (fred.stlouisfed.org). The pattern of unemployment in Fresno County during the pandemic mirrors that of the state overall, with the unemployment rate remaining higher than the statewide average.

The following graph shows the pattern of unemployment in Fresno County over the most recent five-year reporting period.

This visual depiction demonstrates the annual cyclical nature of the Fresno County economy. Because of the seasonal nature of many Fresno County jobs there are annual spikes in unemployment. This is important to the context in which the department does its work. Even during periods of relative economic stability, the county experiences an annual cycle of unemployment peaks in January-March followed by drops in unemployment in September. This pattern was exacerbated by the pandemic with the spring spike in unemployment far exceeding normal patterns. This illustrates a dynamic articulated by an interviewee early in the strategic planning process, "a regional business model that depends upon low-wage and seasonal workers makes the job of delivering social services more difficult". Even during periods of national and statewide economic strength, Fresno County remains regularly challenged.



Strategic Context

Homelessness

Homelessness remains the most serious issue facing California. The Fresno-Madera Continuum of Care (FMCoC) annually publishes a point-in-time homeless count. The most recent release (August 2020) revealed a 45.2% increase in identified homeless from 2019 to 2020. Homelessness resides at the nexus of other social problems such as unemployment, mental health issues, substance abuse, and domestic violence. Homelessness can be viewed as a lagging indicator of other social problems.

Fresno-Madera Continuum of Care, August 2020

2020			
	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Total
Fresno City	1,674	836	2,510
Fresno County	712	29	741
Madera City	250	95	345
Madera County	45	0	45
Total	2,681	960	3,641

2019			
	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Total
Fresno City	1,152	334	1,486
Fresno County	636	9	645
Madera City	260	96	356
Madera County	21	0	21
Total	2,069	439	2,508

Change from 2019 to 2020			
	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Total
Fresno City	522	502	1,024
Fresno County	76	20	96
Madera City	-10	-1	-11
Madera County	24	0	24
Total	612	521	1,133

Percent Change from 2019 to 2020			
	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Total
Fresno City	45.3%	150.3%	68.9%
Fresno County	11.9%	222.2%	14.9%
Madera City	-3.8%	-1.0%	-3.1%
Madera County	114.3%	--	114.3%
Total	29.6%	118.7%	45.2%

Strategic Context

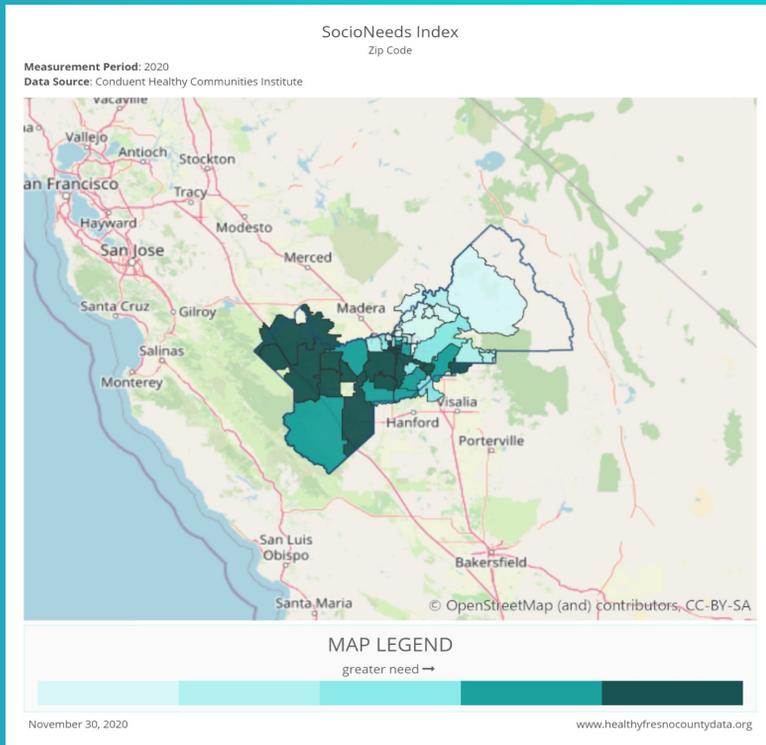
Substance Abuse

A reliable comparative measure of social need is the SocioNeeds Index published by the Conduent Healthy Communities Institute. The map below illustrates the distribution of social need by zip code in Fresno County.

More than 53% of residents in Fresno County reside in zip codes rated in the two highest categories of need as measured by the SocioNeeds Index.

Overall Social Need

Substance abuse continues as a problem throughout the state. The most recent available indicators reveal that the scope of the problem is similar or slightly better/improved in Fresno County. Opioid related deaths in 2019 totaled 44, or 4.4 per 100,000 residents. According to available data this has decreased since 2015. The county is in the lowest category with a stable outlook. Anecdotal evidence around the state suggests that the pandemic may result in higher rates of Opioid abuse.



Strategic Context

Department Operations

The department is quite large, more than 2600 employees, serving a county of more than 1 million residents. The realities of the pandemic have strained the organization to adapt to public health requirements, maintain employee safety, and meet commitments to continue providing excellent client services in a time of great need. Work routines have been disrupted by both the pandemic and the Creek Fire.

Staff members endure personal disruption by economic impact of the pandemic on family members, health and safety concerns, the need to support children attending school remotely, and the uncertainty of how long the circumstances may persist.

Department budgets have not yet been negatively impacted with a year-to-year budget increase of 7% to over \$408 million (County of Fresno, Recommended Budget, 2020-2021). While there has not been an immediate pandemic-related budget impact, the department continues to face challenges in hiring and retaining staff because of complex hiring processes and requirements, and salary competition from other government agencies, school districts, non-profit organizations, and private sector employers. Human resource concerns top the list of strategic priorities.

Significant organizational culture shifts are underway stemming from departmental reorganization shortly before pandemic restrictions were implemented, and the continuation of the physical relocation of most services to a multi-facility campus in Clovis. It is an understatement to say that the department is in an unprecedented time of change and adaptation.

The department has responded quickly and effectively, adjusting work schedules, implementing significant remote work options, deploying technology to enable remote work, mobilizing to provide additional services during a natural disaster occurring mid-pandemic, and managing the complex and shifting policies and regulations normal to government service.

The department's leadership team is recognized throughout the organization for strong leadership and responsiveness. Significant effort has been invested in training and development of executives, managers, and supervisors. In short, the department has adapted with agility, creativity, compassion, and commitment to one of the most challenging times in modern history.

Process

As the realities of the depth and duration of the pandemic restrictions became apparent, the executive leadership team and the consulting team made immediate adjustments to assure that the strategic planning process would not be side-tracked. Major changes in process were implemented as face-to-face meetings were replaced by phone conferences, group discussions were converted to surveys, and consulting days on-site were reduced from fifteen to four.

The planning process is shown graphically on the right.

As each step was completed, additional elements of the plan were developed culminating in the development of strategic directions, strategies, and action steps.



Process

Executive Interviews

The consultants individually interviewed members of the executive team by telephone. Ten questions were posed to the director and each of the deputy directors. The questions and summarization of their answers follow:

1. Is the DSS mission statement timely and appropriate?
 - Mission: The Fresno County Department of Social Services assists adults, children, and families to achieve health, safety, and self-sufficiency through a diverse range of programs and partnerships
 - If not, what would you change?
2. Is the DSS vision statement timely and appropriate?
 - Vision: The people we serve are healthier, stronger, and thriving because the Fresno County Department of Social Services staff and partners deliver excellent, quality services that lead to positive outcomes.
 - If not, what would you change?

There was general agreement that the mission statement remained timely and appropriate. Remarks critical of the mission were limited and included suggestions that the mission could more explicitly reflect helping families to help themselves; reflect more need for client accessibility; and a suggestion that the mission statement was not top-of-mind for most people because it is not memorable.

A bit more tension emerged around the vision statement with specific concerns around the use of the words “thriving” and “excellent.” Comments included suggestions that the very nature of their work means that people are not thriving, that excellence is subjective and not defined, and that agency seems to take a great deal of credit for the success of their clients when the credit should go to the clients themselves. Other observations included the possible addition of the words “providing hope” to the vision statement.

Process

Executive Interviews

3. Are the DSS core values timely and appropriate?
 - Values:
 - Develop relationships with all
 - Show integrity with all
 - Seek excellence in all
 - If not, what would you change?

The values were generally acceptable to those queried, although there was commentary that the values do not speak to what the actual work of the agency, that the values are too transactional, and that the values are not top-of-mind with staff.

4. What do you believe is the primary purpose of DSS?

Activities identified in the survey as the primary purpose of DSS included the following:

- Serving basic needs
- Meeting people where they are
- Partnering with other organizations
- Empowering clients to achieve and gain self-sufficiency
- Provide a safety net for the most vulnerable
- Providing services other organizations cannot

5. What do you believe are the most pressing social challenges in Fresno County (not prioritized)?

Pressing social challenges in Fresno County included the following:

- Homelessness
- Mental and physical health
- Effects of immigration
- Poverty – an area business model that depends on people living on the margin
- Food insecurity
- Rural issues (transportation)
- Low agricultural wages
- Impact of prison release
- Conservative political atmosphere
- Wealth gap
- Aging demographics
- Funding infrastructure
- Access to technology
- Job training

Process

Executive Interviews

8. What three to five major initiatives do you think DSS is best positioned to address?

Major initiatives identified included the following:

- Addressing homelessness
- Addressing food insecurity
- Improving human resource operations (county level primarily)
- Expanding technology deployment
- Improving partnerships
- Preventing child abuse
- Improving access to health care
- Reforming the continuum of care
- Providing aging and adult services
- Addressing worker mobility and transferability
- Strengthening culture through common values
- Increasing employee equity

9. What resources to you think DSS must obtain to address those initiatives?

The following resources were identified as necessary to address potential priorities:

- Technology
- Staffing stability
- Improved data access
- Long-term planning
- Legislative action
- Improved communication systems

10. Other comments?

Additional comments were generally aligned with data already presented in this report.

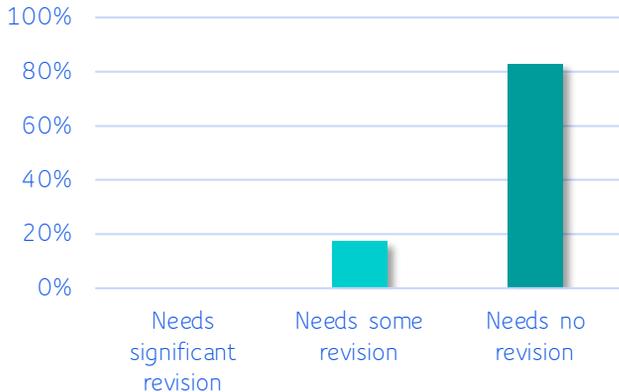
Process

Manager Surveys

The same 10 questions asked of the executive team by telephone were posed to mid-managers in the form of an online survey. A total of 29 of the 34 mid-managers responded to the anonymous, online survey for an 85% response rate. Manager's survey responses aligned well with executive team interview feedback; Data is shown below.

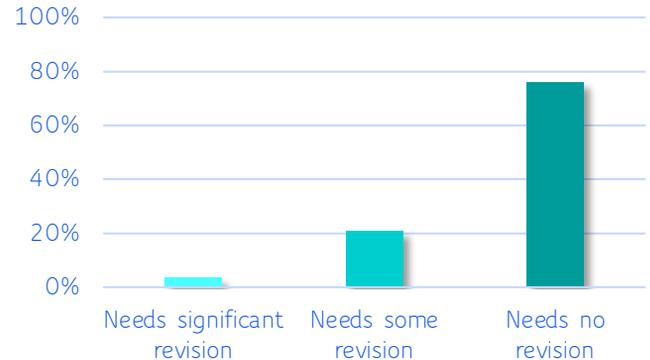
Q1

Is the DSS mission statement timely and appropriate?
Mission: The Fresno County Department of Social Services assists adults, children, and families to achieve health, safety, and self-sufficiency through a diverse range of programs and partnerships.



Q2

Is the DSS vision statement timely and appropriate?
Vision: The people we serve are healthier, stronger, and thriving because the Fresno County Department of Social Services staff and partners deliver excellent, quality services that lead to positive outcomes.



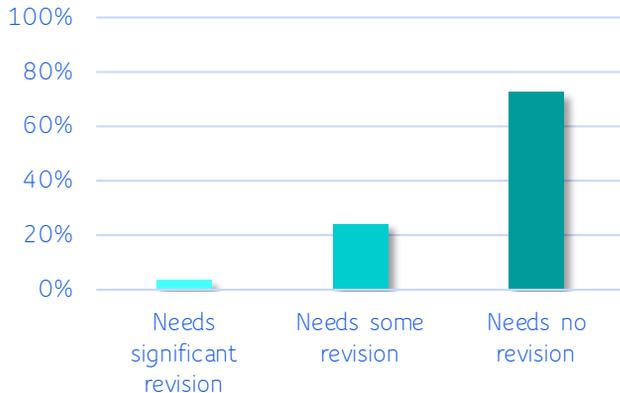
Process

Manager Surveys

Q3

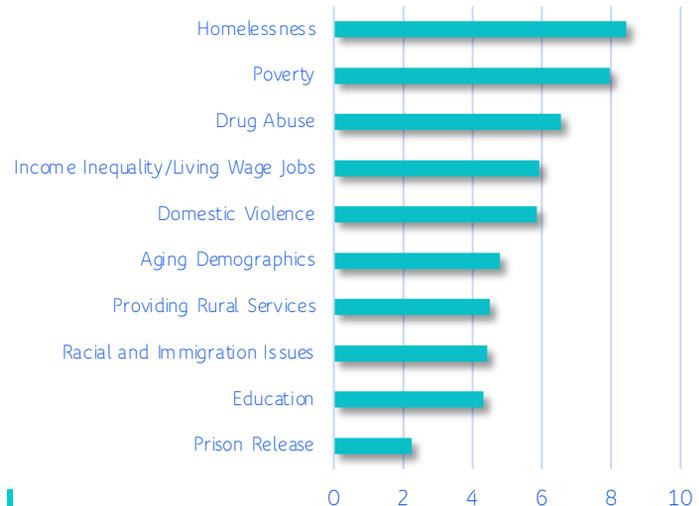
Are the DSS Values times and appropriate?

- Develop relationships with all
- Show integrity with all
- Seek excellence in all



Q4

Please rank the following pressing social concerns in order of importance in Fresno County with 1 being most pressing and 10 being least pressing.



Process

Manager Surveys

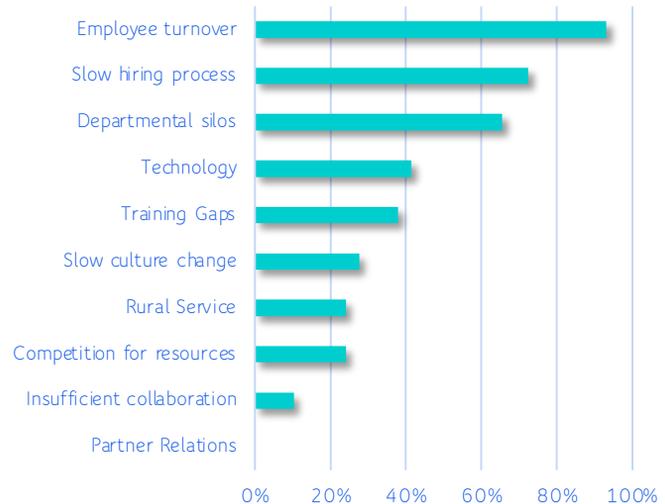
Q6

What are the biggest strengths of Fresno County DSS?
(Please select no more than 5 strengths.)



Q7

Please rank the following pressing social concerns in order of importance in Fresno County with 1 being most pressing and 10 being least pressing.

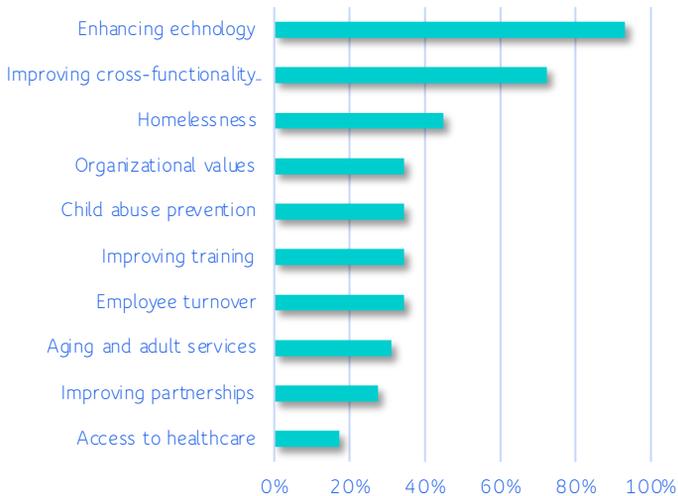


Process

Manager Surveys

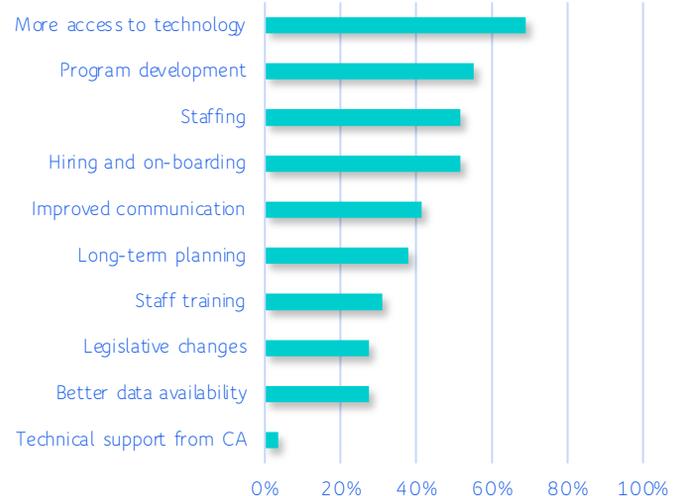
Q8

What major initiatives is Fresno County DSS best positioned to address in the next 3-5 years? (Please select no more than 5 potential initiatives.)



Q9

What resources are needed to address the identified major initiatives? (Please select no more than 5 resources.)



Process

Supervisor Surveys

12 questions were asked of supervisors throughout the department. 164 of 335 supervisors responded to the survey for a response rate of 49%.

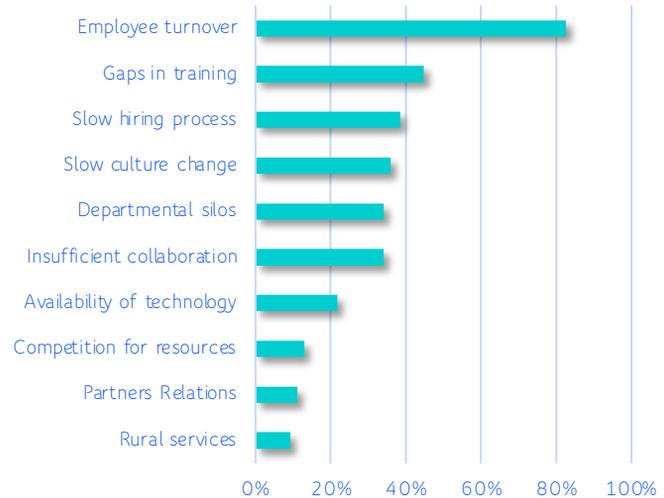
Q1

What are the biggest strengths of Fresno County DSS?
(Please select no more than 5 strengths.)



Q2

What are the biggest challenges facing Fresno County DSS?
(Please select no more than 5 challenges.)

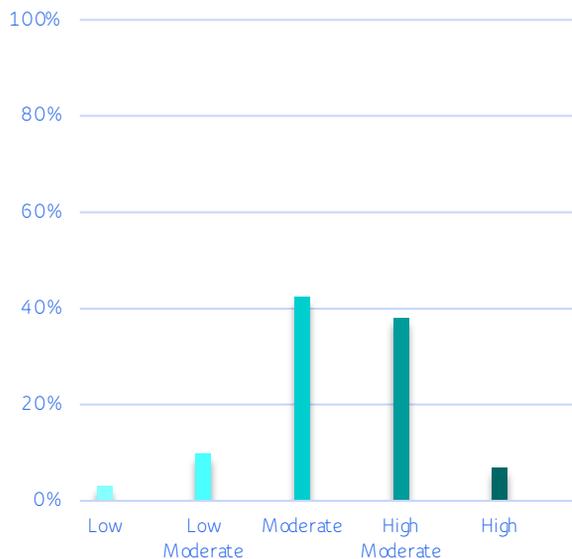


Process

Supervisor Surveys

Q4

How would you rate the general job satisfaction of the staff you supervise?



Q5

Please rank the following strategic directions in order of importance.

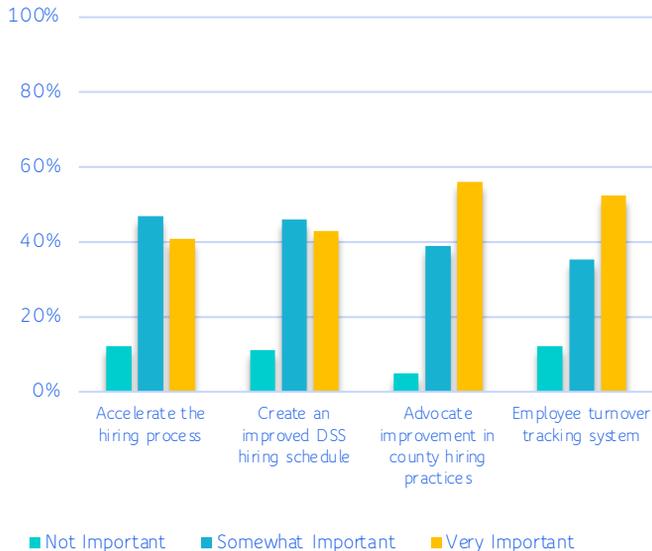


Process

Supervisor Surveys

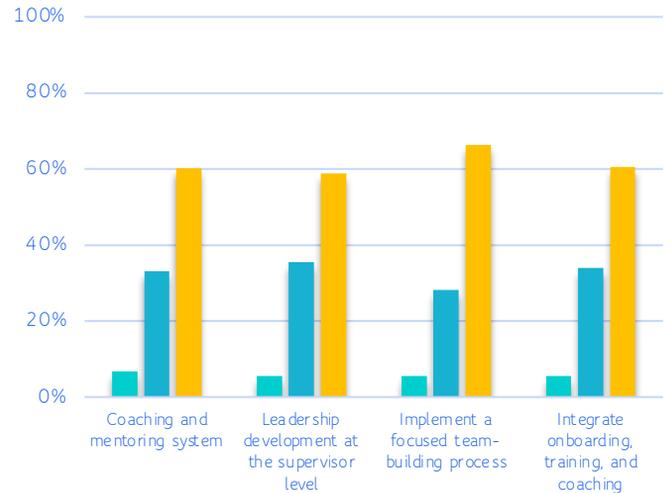
Q7

Please rate the following strategies related to human resource practices.



Q8

Please rank the following strategic directions in order of importance.

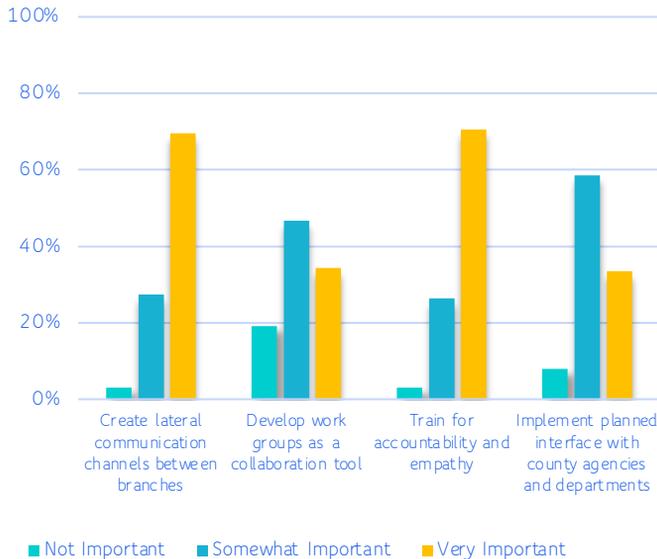


Process

Supervisor Surveys

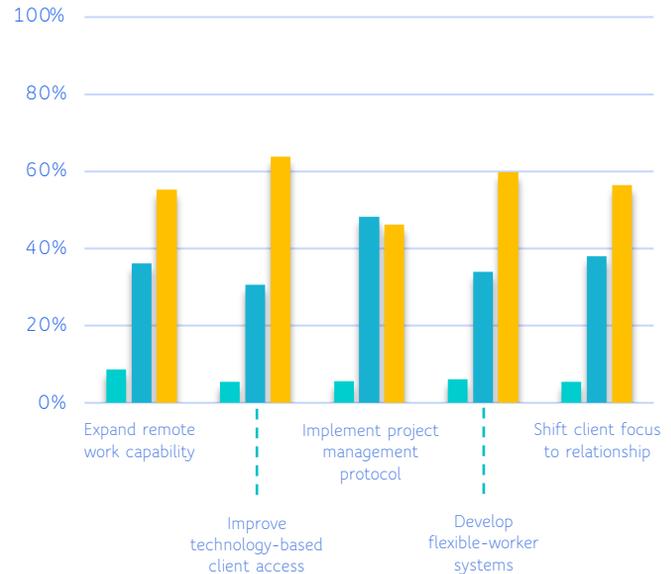
Q9

Please rate the following strategies related to collaboration.



Q10

Please rate the following strategies related to operational systems and practices.

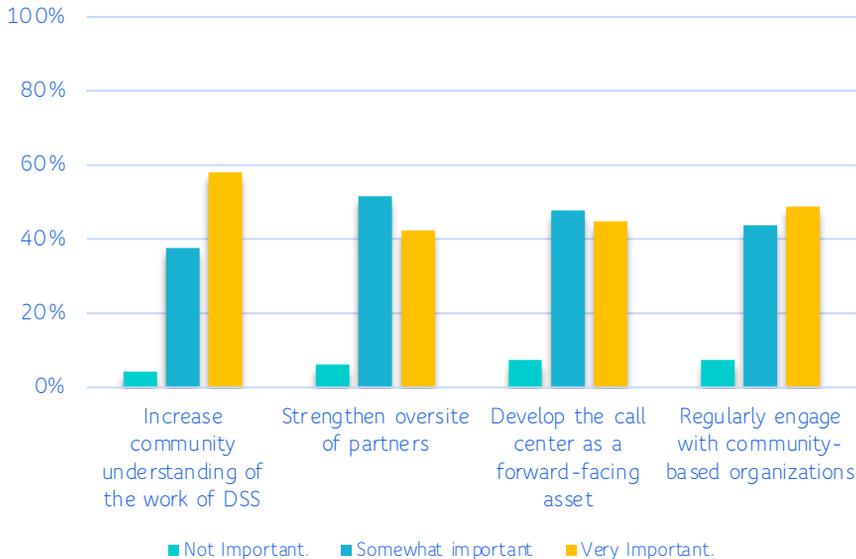


Process

Supervisor Surveys

Q11

Please rate the following strategies related to community partnerships.



Process

Community Partner Survey and Interviews

13 questions were asked of community partners of the department. 14 responses were received from 65 invited participants for a response rate of 22%. Four respondents completed follow up interviews. Questions were largely qualitative and resulted in a rating of 4/5 for DSS on issues of general performance. DSS received high marks for communication, oversight, community impact, and professionalism. Opportunities for improvement included reducing staff turnover, interacting more directly with DSS clients being served by partner organizations, and developing more personal relationships with clients.

Strategies and Action Steps

Strengthen Human Resource Practices – Improve recruitment and hiring practices to fill vacant positions, reduce turnover and the impact of turnover, and improve client experience by enhancing staff continuity:

- Advocate improvement in county hiring practices
 - Conduct a Director level summit with key county officials to identify and recommend changes in human resource collaboration between county human resources and departmental human resources.
 - Prepare detailed recommendations to be presented to the appropriate decision-makers.
- Accelerate the hiring process
 - Streamline transition of temporary workers into permanent status
 - Strengthen interview panels by incentivizing participation
- Create an improved DSS hiring schedule
 - Implement continuous recruitment for positions with frequent vacancy
 - Allow flexible start-dates, not only at beginning of pay period
- Deploy a scientific-based employee satisfaction measure
 - Review and select satisfaction measurement tools such as the Predictive Index, Lattice (or another appropriate platform) to measure employee experience or develop in-house. Determine if the same instrument can be used across the department or if customized branch versions are required.
- Implement a data-based employee turnover tracking system
 - Implement exit interviews/surveys at the branch level for departing employees
 - Admin branch will develop employee retention/turnover tracking system

Strategies and Action Steps

Enhance Training and Development – In collaboration with DSS Staff Development implement measures to more quickly on-board and train staff, and to provide ongoing training to maintain effectiveness of leadership and staff:

- Develop a branch-based coaching/mentoring system
 - Adopt a coaching paradigm such as the GROW method (or another appropriate platform)
 - Create a common set of branch principles that are aligned with department values
 - Train coaches and mentors in each branch on the coaching and mentoring method
 - Execute a planned schedule of coaching/mentoring
 - Develop a peer mentoring/training program for social work staff so they feel more supported and are better equipped to meet job expectations. This action step is supported by the System Improvement Plan (SIP) for Child Welfare
 - Create a Quarterly Ongoing On-the-Job Training (OJT) Workgroup in Ongoing Services to ensure relevant OJT assignments during Induction training and to encourage collaboration with Staff Development

Strategies and Action Steps

Enhance Training and Development

- Increase leadership development at the supervisor level
- Expand Supportive Supervision I and II to include ongoing training after the initial training.
 - Implement a 360 assessment program (DiSC 363, Predictive Index Manager Development, or other appropriate method) to improve manager and supervisor performance using behavioral science techniques
 - Enhance social work supervisor training and coaching to help supervisors provide greater support and guidance to their staff. This action step is supported by the System Improvement Plan (SIP) for Child Welfare
- Implement a focused team-building process at all levels
 - Utilize a behavioral-based team building process (Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team, Predictive Index, or other appropriate method), to improve team performance at each level of the organization
- Integrate onboarding and training into branch operations
 - Map onboarding and on-the-job training needs in each branch
 - Perform a gap analysis to determine areas in need of improvement
 - Assign specific program managers or supervisors to execute branch-based onboarding and training

Strategies and Action Steps

Improve Collaboration – Focus on improving collaboration within branches, between branches, and with other governmental agencies critical to departmental effectiveness:

- Create lateral communication channels between branches below the DD level
 - Map critical communication links/interfaces at the program manager and supervisor level between branches
 - Identify why these links are critical, i.e., what cross-branch operations are impacted? What decisions should be made collaboratively between branches?
 - Create formal workgroups around these critical links
- Participate in Main Operations and Corrective Action Committees
- Create a cross-division Supervisory Communication Team
- Create a supervisory collaborative quarterly meeting between Intake, Ongoing, and Case Management branches

Strategies and Action Steps

Improve Collaboration

- Develop work groups as a collaboration model
 - Map critical cross-functional projects and processes
 - Assign workgroups to each identified area
 - Child Welfare will support supervisor work groups that are committed to the implementation of the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM) and collaboration among supervisors within the branch. This action step is supported by the Child Welfare Fresno Implementation Team (FIT)
 - Implement intensive family finding efforts to ensure that children and youth in care can maintain and develop permanent connections with relatives and other important individuals in their lives early and going. This action step is supported by the System Improvement Plan (SIP) for Child Welfare
 - Track progress with universally adopted project management process
- Train for accountability and empathy
 - Implement training based upon principles of emotional intelligence for all supervisors
- Implement planned interface with other county agencies and departments to build collaboration
 - Map key branch relationships with other agencies
 - Schedule and execute work groups, peer-to-peer contact, social gatherings, and informational workshops to create mutual understanding and empathy between organizations

Strategies and Action Steps

Improve Operational Systems and Practices – Constantly and consistently examine and improve systems and practices to ensure client access to services through multiple platforms, efficiency in service delivery, and flexibility in client interface:

- Expand remote work capability
 - Articulate a post-Covid policy regarding remote work
 - Specify which positions are appropriate for long-term remote work
 - Conduct a technology gap analysis to identify areas of need supporting remote work
 - Prioritize and execute technology development reflecting the gap analysis
- Improve technology-based client access
 - Assess and expand web-based and app-based client interface
 - Coordinate technology-based interface with call center operations
- Implement department-wide project management processes
 - Make standard the method/methods of project management and institutionalize their use throughout the department
- Develop flexible-worker systems
 - Identify positions with compatible knowledge and skill requirements
 - Identify primary and secondary roles for staff
 - Train staff to fill secondary roles (voluntary basis if necessary)
 - Implement schedule to periodically rotate employees into secondary roles to keep skills current
- Shift client focus from transactional to relationship
 - Rededicate staff to maintaining balance between transactional task completion and relationship orientation by emphasizing and deploying empathy techniques
 - Strengthen child and family team (CFT) meetings to identify permanency outcomes early and ongoing throughout the life of a case. This action step is supported by the System Improvement Plan (SIP) for Child Welfare

Strategies and Action Steps

Enhance Community Partnerships – Strengthen community partnerships and strategic alliances, increasing departmental impact through working with other governmental and non-governmental agencies:

- Implement communication strategy to increase community understanding of the role of DSS
 - Restart Advocacy Collaboration Meetings
 - Child Welfare will host an annual community resource fair for staff and community partners. This action step is supported by the Child Welfare Fresno Implementation Team (FIT)
 - Expand use of digital communication and social media to reinforce the DSS brand
- Strengthen oversight of partners with vendor relationships
 - Incorporate feedback from clients served by partners in program improvement
 - Expedite services to parents to ensure that parents can reunify with their children in a timely manner. This action step is supported by the System Improvement Plan (SIP) for Child Welfare
- Fully develop the call center as a forward-facing asset
 - Create and implement a robust external communication plan to inform the public of the call center, its scope, purpose, and availability
 - Focus resources on hiring and training an adequate workforce to prevent employee burnout
 - Fully develop metrics and tracking systems to quantitatively measure call center performance
- Create intentional, regular engagement with community-based organizations
 - Map key branch relationships with outside community-based organizations
 - Schedule and execute work groups, peer-to-peer contact, social gatherings, and informational workshops to create mutual understanding and empathy between organizations
- Program Manager and Supervisor representatives attend Fresno County Community Health Improvement Partnership (FCHIP) meeting once meetings resume

Timelines and Metrics

Strengthen Human Resource Practices - Improve recruitment and hiring practices to fill vacant positions, reduce turnover and the impact of turnover, and improve client experience by enhancing staff continuity

Advocate improvement in county hiring practices

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Conduct a Director level summit with key county officials to identify and recommend changes in human resource collaboration between county human resources and departmental human resources.	Director and Executive Team	6/30/2021	Conducting summit
Prepare detailed recommendations to (cont.)	Director and Executive Team	9/30/2021	Delivery of written recommendations

be presented to the appropriate decision-makers.

Timelines and Metrics

Strengthen Human Resource Practices

Accelerate the hiring process

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Streamline transition of temporary workers into permanent status	Administration branch with support of Director	9/30/2021	Implement policy change
Strengthen interview panels by incentivizing participation	Cross-branch collaboration	12/31/2021	Implement targeted actions to improve participation

Create an improved DSS hiring schedule

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Implement continuous recruitment for positions with frequent vacancy	Administration branch with support of County HR and other branches	12/31/2021	Implementation of meaningful process changes
Allow flexible start-dates, not only at beginning of pay period	Administration branch with Director support in collaboration with County HR	12/31/2021	Change in practice

Timelines and Metrics

Strengthen Human Resource Practices

Deploy a scientific-based employee satisfaction measure

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Review and select satisfaction measurement tools such as the Predictive Index, Lattice (or another appropriate platform) to measure employee experience or develop in-house. Determine if the same instrument can be used across the department or if customized branch versions are required.	Executive Team with leadership from HR	12/31/2021	Implementation of ongoing measurement system

Implement a data-based employee turnover tracking system

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Implement exit interviews/surveys at the branch level for departing employees	Each branch in collaboration with HR	12/31/2021	Implementation of ongoing system
Admin branch will develop employee retention/turnover tracking system	HR and IT in collaboration with each branch	Development during 2021 with full launch by 3/30/2022	Implementation of full tracking and reporting system

Timelines and Metrics

Enhance Training and Development – Implement measures to more quickly onboard and train staff, and to provide ongoing training to maintain effectiveness of leadership and staff:

Advocate improvement in county hiring practices

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Adopt a coaching paradigm such as the GROW method (or another appropriate platform)	Executive Team	6/30/2021	Adoption of department-wide paradigm
Create a common set of branch principles that are aligned with department values	Each Deputy Director	12/31/2021	Adoption and publishing of branch principles
Develop a peer mentoring/training program for social work staff so they feel more supported and are better equipped to meet job expectations. This action step is supported by the System Improvement Plan (SIP) for Child Welfare	Deputy Director	Full program operational 2022	Implementation of full program
Create a Quarterly Ongoing On-the-Job Training (OJT) Workgroup in Ongoing Services to ensure relevant OJT assignments during Induction training and to encourage collaboration with Staff Development	Ongoing Services Deputy Director	6/30/2021	Creation of the workgroup with a specific set of task orders

Timelines and Metrics

Enhance Training and Development

Increase leadership development at the supervisor level

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Expand Supportive Supervision I and II to all supervisory staff	Administration Branch	6/30/2022	Full training of all supervisors
Implement a 360 assessment program (DiSC 363, Predictive Index Manager Development, or other appropriate method) to improve manager and supervisor performance using behavioral science techniques	Executive Team	6/30/2022	Full implantation of ongoing 360 process
Enhance social work supervisor training and coaching to help supervisors provide greater support and guidance to their staff. This action step is supported by the System Improvement Plan (SIP) for Child Welfare	Deputy Director	12/31/2021	Implementation of social work supervisor training plan

Timelines and Metrics

Enhance Training and Development

Implement a focused team-building process at all levels

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Utilize a behavioral-based team building process (Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team, Predictive Index, or other appropriate method), to improve team performance at each level of the organization	Executive team in collaboration with HR	12/31/2021	Implementation of team building process

Integrate onboarding and training into branch operations

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Map onboarding and on-the-job training needs in each branch	Deputy Director and designates	12/31/2021	Mapping completed
Assign specific program managers or supervisors to execute branch-based onboarding and training	Designated program managers and supervisors	6/30/2022	Assignments made

Timelines and Metrics

Improve Collaboration – Focus on improving collaboration within branches, between branches, and with other governmental agencies critical to departmental effectiveness:

Create lateral communication channels between branches below the DD level

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Map critical communication links/interfaces at the program manager and supervisor level between branches	Deputy Director in collaboration with cross-branch workgroups	6/30/2022	Creation of communication map
Identify why these links are critical, i.e., what cross-branch operations are impacted? What decisions should be made collaboratively between branches?	Deputy Director in collaboration with cross-branch workgroups	6/30/2022	Illustration of critical links
Create formal workgroups around these critical links	Deputy Directors and Program Managers	6/30/2022	Launch of ongoing workgroups
Participate in Main Operations and Corrective Action Committees	Deputy Directors or representatives	Immediately	Strengthening of committees
Create a cross-division Supervisory Communication Team	Deputy Directors and Program Managers	9/30/2021	Creation and implementation of a cross-branch communication workgroup at the manager level
Create a supervisory collaborative quarterly meeting between Intake, Ongoing, and Case Management branches	Deputy Directors and Program Managers	3/31/2021	Launch of meeting schedule

Timelines and Metrics

Improve Collaboration

Develop work groups as a collaboration model

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Map critical cross-functional projects and processes	Deputy Directors	12/31/2021	Creation of project/process map
Assign workgroups to each identified area	Deputy Directors, Program Managers	3/30/2022	Workgroups assigned and functioning
Child Welfare will support supervisor work groups that are committed to the implementation of the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM) and collaboration among supervisors within the branch. This action step is supported by the Child Welfare Fresno Implementation Team (FIT)	Child Welfare Deputy Director and Program Managers	12/31/2021	Workgroups created and functioning
Implement intensive family finding efforts to ensure that children and youth in care can maintain and develop permanent connections with relatives and other important individuals in their lives early and going. This action step is supported by the System Improvement Plan (SIP) for Child Welfare	Deputy Director and Program Managers, Child Welfare	6/30/2021	Implementation of specific changes
Track progress with universally adopted project management process	Executive Team	6/30/2021	Identification and implementation of department-wide project management process

Timelines and Metrics

Improve Collaboration

Train for accountability and empathy

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Implement training based upon principles of emotional intelligence for all supervisors	Executive Team	6/30/2021	Training designed and implemented

Implement planned interface with other county agencies and departments to build collaboration

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Map key branch relationships with other agencies	Deputy Directors and Program Managers	12/31/2021	Relationship mapping completed
Schedule and execute work groups, peer-to-peer contact, social gatherings, and informational workshops to create mutual understanding and empathy between organizations	Executive Team	6/30/2022	Schedule of events, gatherings, workshops, and interactions created and implemented

Timelines and Metrics

Improve Operational Systems and Practices – Constantly and consistently examine and improve systems and practices to ensure client access to services through multiple platforms, efficiency in service delivery, and flexibility in client interface:

Expand remote work capability

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Articulate a post-Covid policy regarding remote work	Executive Team	2/28/2021	Policy articulated in writing
Specify which positions are appropriate for long-term remote work	Executive Team	3/30/2021	Positions identified and articulated in policy
Conduct a technology gap analysis to identify areas of need supporting remote work	IT in collaboration with all branches	6/30/2021	Written report completed
Prioritize and execute technology development reflecting the gap analysis	IT in collaboration with all branches	9/30/2021	Actionable schedule of technology steps created

Improve technology-based client access

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Assess and expand web-based and app-based client interface	IT in collaboration with Deputy Directors and Program Managers	9/30/2021	Schedule of implementation for improvements in remote client access
Coordinate technology-based interface with call center operations	IT in collaboration with call center managers	12/31/2021	Assure that call center tracking systems are in place and well-functioning

Timelines and Metrics

Improve Operational Systems and Practices

Implement department-wide project management processes

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Make standard the method/methods of project management and institutionalize their use throughout the department	Executive Team	6/30/2022	Standardization of project management methods across the department

Develop flexible-worker systems

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Identify positions with compatible knowledge and skill requirements	Deputy Directors and Program Managers	12/31/2023	Complete mapping of positions
Train staff to fill secondary roles (voluntary basis if necessary)	Deputy Directors, Program Managers, and Supervisors	12/31/2023	Training completed
Implement schedule to periodically rotate employees into secondary roles to keep skills current	Deputy Directors, Program Managers, and Supervisors	12/31/2023	Job rotation plan implemented

Shift client focus from transactional-orientation to relationship-orientation

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Rededicate staff to maintaining balance between transactional task completion and relationship orientation by emphasizing and deploying empathy techniques supported by the System Improvement Plan (SIP) for Child Welfare	Child Welfare Deputy Director and Program Managers	12/31/2021	Completion of empathy-based training

Timelines and Metrics

Enhance Community Partnerships – Strengthen community partnerships and strategic alliances, increasing departmental impact through working with other governmental and non-governmental agencies:

Implement communication strategy to increase community understanding of the role of DSS

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Restart Advocacy Collaboration Meetings	Deputy Directors and Program Managers	6/30/2021	Meetings reconvened with meaningful purpose
Child Welfare will host an annual community resource fair for staff and community partners. This action step is supported by the Child Welfare Fresno Implementation Team (FIT)	Child Welfare	6/30/2022	Community Fair Hosted
Expand use of digital communication and social media to reinforce the DSS brand	Communication Team	6/30/2022	Robust external communication plan developed and executed

Strengthen oversight of partners with vendor relationships

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Incorporate feedback from partner staff and clients served by partners in program improvement	Program Managers	12/31/2021	Actively engaged clients of service providers
System Improvement Plan (SIP) for Child Welfare	Child Welfare Deputy Director and Program Managers	6/30/2022	Identify and execute specific steps to expedite these services

Timelines and Metrics

Enhance Community Partnerships

Fully develop the call center as a forward-facing asset

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Create and implement a robust external communication plan to inform the public of the call center, its scope, purpose, and availability to build capacity and trust	Deputy Director and Communication Team	6/30/2021	Execute communication strategy
Focus resources on hiring and training an adequate workforce to prevent employee burnout	Call Center Leadership and HR	12/31/2021	Implement focused hiring strategy
Fully develop metrics and tracking systems to quantitatively measure call center performance	Call Center and intake branch leadership, and IT	12/31/2021	Implement tracking systems

Create intentional, regular engagement with community-based organizations

Action	Responsibility	Date	Metric
Map key branch relationships with outside community-based organizations	Deputy Directors and Program Managers	12/31/2021	Mapping completed
Schedule and execute work groups, peer-to-peer contact, social gatherings, and informational workshops to mutual understanding and empathy between organizations	Deputy Directors and Program Managers	6/30/2022	Events and interactions scheduled and executed
Program Manager and Supervisor representatives attend Fresno County Community Health Improvement Partnership (FCHIP) meeting once meetings resume	Deputy Directors and Program Managers	6/30/2022	Robust and meaningful meeting participation

Tracking Systems

Tracking and monitoring fifty different action-steps requires accountability, focus, and follow-up.

Steps to successfully tracking:

- The Strategic Implementation Team should continue to oversee appropriate, chartered working groups to develop and implement action-steps supporting strategies. The SIT should meet routinely to track progress, problem solve, and elevate issues for Executive Team decision making.
- Do not be afraid to change strategies or action steps. The objective is to achieve the five big strategic directions. Some of the strategies and action steps outlined here will emerge to be impractical or ineffective. New ideas will emerge. The document should be treated as a road map. Sometimes detours appear or new, better routes appear. Be flexible. The Executive Team holds final accountability for overall plan implementation and will make necessary plan adjustments based on changing conditions.
- Do a significant review of the plan every year and extend it one year. Planning should be continuous and seamless.