

Chapter 2: Strategic Goals Operations^[4]

The County Board made significant strategic decisions in 2019 when they created the positions of County Administrator and Economic Development Director. Recommendations in this chapter build on those initial investments and include projects that were indirectly set in motion as a result of the choice to transition the executive branch of government from an Administrative Coordinator to a County Administrator^[2].

Organizational Structure^[3]

The following strategies will enable the county to find operational efficiencies, thereby freeing up revenue and capacity in the form of staff time.

Streamline Organizational Structure (Effectiveness)

Continue the path that began with the creation of the County Administrator, using this position to centralize and coordinate county operations whenever possible.

Quality of a service or product is not what you put into it, but what the customer gets out of it.

- Peter Drucker

Tactics:

- Create county wide organizational chart
- Centralize common county-wide processes and systems under the County Administrator.
 - Create finance, HR and maintenance department
- Improve the county's procurement process to be consistent county-wide. Maximize procurement rewards or benefits and identify joint procurement opportunities across departments or with other organizations.
 - Improve purchasing policy
- Purchase a payroll program that is ~~Coordinate upgrades to the payroll process so it's~~ uniform for employees across all departments or enterprises.

Improve Financial Practices (Effectiveness)

Implement the following tactics to improve the county's financial accountability, strategy, and flexibility. Doing so will yield improvements in financial education and also help create a baseline for performance metrics.

Tactics:

- Improve the county's bond rating by targeting improvement opportunities identified in Moody's Rating Action of February 2020 and Rating Change of March 2018 (Appendix B).
- Improve the budget process to implement flexibility, strategic thinking, accountability, and implementation of the Strategic Plan. Specific actions include:
 - Create budget narratives summarizing how new initiatives or improvements implement the Strategic Plan.
 - Define value that could be added with 20% *more* funding, or lost due to a 20% *reduction* in funding.
 - Identify cuts that would not impact strategic planning goals or mandated-statutorily required services.
 - Identify how departments would respond to unexpected cuts or events^[4].
- Develop a capital improvement plan inclusive of facilities, roads, and equipment.
- Analyze the county's indirect rate to capture highest possible amount of grant funding, and establish a metric for productivity and efficiency.
- Increase discretionary and variable revenue source (fines, fees, grants, etc.) as a portion of the overall budget.

Increase Coordination (Effectiveness)

The county and its municipalities have many over-lapping interests, offering a good opportunity for partnerships that

may result in improved service delivery or an overall savings to county residents through efficiencies.

Tactics:

- Engage in joint procurement materials and equipment whenever possible.
- Engage in joint contracting for capital projects to find savings resulting from reduced mobilization fees, increased competitive bidding, etc. (e.g. mowing, paving, road systems, snow plowing),
- Explore opportunities to share or contract staffing services.
- Create additional and modern methods to communicate events and initiatives, and to generate direct input from the community. This could include community engagement via a new website or a social media presence.
- Coordinate community develop and land use decision-making in Richland Center among institutional partners such as Richland County, Richland Center, Richland Hospital, and Richland Local School District.

Workforce (Growth)

~~County employees are knowledge workers whose value is grounded in the information that enables them to do their job.~~ The county's ability to provide quality services, ~~therefore~~, relies entirely on the attraction and retention of knowledgeable, hard-working employees, and the continued acquisition and effective transfer of knowledge.

"We should work to increase the desirability of being a Richland County employee."

- David Turk, Richland County Board Supervisor

Improve employee Pay and HR Policies

The financial cost of turnover is usually minimal compared to the hidden cost of lost productivity during the resulting transition. For this reason, retention of quality employees should be a primary focus to ensure the consistent delivery of high-quality services.

Tactics:

- Obtaining market value for employee wages as determined through the county's current 2018-wage study.
- Give annual pay increases
- MonitorDevelop thea compensation and classification system for all positions to ensure positions remain market-competitive (public and private sectors).
- Develop a uniform performance evaluation process that includes annual reviews, 6-month check-ins, and exit interviews.
- Develop a uniform set of human resources policies and procedures to improve transparency and accountability throughout the organization, including an update to the employee handbook and other related documents.

Develop a culture of support for employees (Improvement)

Non-monetary compensation is also critical to employee retention, since it builds organizational culture that supports employees. There are several ways the county can support these initiatives.

Tactics:

- Celebrate success and the professional and personal achievements of employees. Recognize new hires, retirements, and year-of-service milestones. Build a culture that supports and celebrates its people.
- Enable and empower departments to develop celebratory or team-building events. Day-long departmental retreats or other benefits can help build culture at a minimal expense.
- Create a total benefits program for employees that highlights total compensation and investment of the county in its employees, inclusive of salary, fringe benefits, wellness, and professional development.
- Increase vacation time for new employees.
- Evaluate flexible work schedules.

Prioritize Service over Staffing (Improvement)

Prior to refilling a vacant position, the county should evaluate workforce needs through the lens of the service being delivered, not the means of service delivery, and implement the most effective means of service provision.

Tactics:

- For each unmet existing service or new service being proposed, evaluate staffing needs using the following analysis:
 - How does current staffing compare to peer counties.
 - Can we *Build*? – invest in learning and development required to train staff to provide the service.
 - Should we *Buy*? – post the position, offering market-rate pay for a competitive application process.
 - Is there opportunity to *Borrow*? – collaborate with other entities on cost-sharing this position, or contract it out to a consultant for a short-period.
 - Can you *Bridge* the gap? –fill a vacant position through an intentional succession planning process.
 - Should we *Stop* providing this service or position?

Capacity (Effectiveness)

Capacity, specifically the education and training of the Richland County Board and staff to perform their duties, was a common theme during the planning process. Many newer members wanted further education on various aspects of their job. Staff were commended for their subject-matter knowledge, with further training recommendations focusing on the management and human resource aspects of their job.

Invest in Education of County Board Supervisors (Improvement)

The County Board currently consists of several new Supervisors brought on during the onset of the COVID pandemic, and during the planning process they recognized the need for both initial and on-going education on a variety of topics.

Tactics:

- Formalize an on-boarding process for newly elected Supervisors, including:
 - Creation of a mentor program partnering tenured Supervisors with new Supervisors.
 - Intentional subject area expertise growth. Proactively bring topics to the board to encourage research and learning in individual supervisors who can then bring back information to share with the whole board. Grow institutional knowledge.
 - Hold informal meetings with outgoing Supervisors and their successors to facilitate knowledge transfer.
 - Fund new Supervisors' attendance at annual Wisconsin Counties Association training or conferences.
 - Create on-boarding folder, expectations of supervisors
- Support the attendance by new Supervisors at major Committee meetings, such as attending Finance Committee meetings during the annual budget development process. Create a mechanism to share agendas with all County Board Supervisors in order to facilitate this.
- Support cross-training, collaboration, and peer learning between County Board Supervisors and their counterparts on the boards of outside partners, such as peer county boards, Neighborhood Services of Southwest Wisconsin, Southwest Wisconsin Community Action Program, Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, and the Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board.
- Conduct annual on-going training covering basic concepts of local government, such as the role of counties, county government finances, the role of county boards, elections, and departmental work.

Deepen Staff Training in Leadership and Management (Improvement)

~~County staff frequently have the opportunity to attend conferences specific to their department. However, further~~

training in management, leadership, and process improvement was identified as a potential growth area.

Tactics

- Sponsor department head training targeted at leadership and management, including Lean process training or UW Continuing Education certifications in Public Management or Human Resources.
- Ensure conference attendance and professional development is aligned with the goals of the Strategic Plan.
- On-going training or education targeted at the evaluation, adoption, and implementation of new technology to improve operational efficiency.
- Educate employees on how government works and the need for teamwork and partnership within county departments
- Create a culture of sharing information and learning from peer counties.

Transparency (Improvement)

- All committee/boards have folders with all meeting materials on iPads
- Meeting materials listed on county website for all meetings
- Listserv to automatically send agendas to whoever wants to be informed
- All committees/boards are recorded and up on website

Growth

Economic development and population growth must remain a priority if the county is going to reverse the projected population decline and workforce shortages. Maintaining the funding for the Economic Development Director partnership with Richland Center is critical to this effort. The following strategies are intended to reflect the county's community and economic development priorities.

Maintain investment in Workforce and Community Development

Demographic projections and input from county employers reflect a dire need to grow the overall population, with an emphasis on the workforce attraction. Without a growth in workforce population, there will continue to be significant challenges to business attraction and retention. There will also be limitations on the county's school enrollment and tax base.

Tactics:

- Prioritize new home construction, and development of incentives or programs to attract developers using smart growth concepts. Smart growth planned economic and community development that attempts to curb urban sprawl and worsening environmental conditions.
- Encourage improvements to existing property to increase attractiveness
- Support workforce development initiatives directed at attracting new residents.
- Support and invest in broadband expansion throughout the county.
- Identify financially sustainable use options for the UW Richland campus ~~in the event the current relationship ceases.~~
- Continue to invest in community and economic development partnerships with a demonstrated return-on-investment.

Support Business Attraction and Retention

In addition to the workforce attraction, the county must prioritize tax base growth through business attraction and expansion.

Tactics:

- Develop a portfolio of incentives to support business growth.
- Identify priority areas in the county for future industrial, commercial, or residential development.
- Identify future land uses for county or municipal-owned land informed by economic opportunities and environmental constraints.

Improve County Identity and Marketing

The greatest unrealized potential for Richland County is the ability to capitalize on its distinctive beauty. Leveraging this asset for growth will support many of the strategies and tactics listed elsewhere in this plan.

Tactics:

- Collaborate with county partners in the development of a distinctive brand for Richland County that will serve to build a sense of identity and pride, and help attract new residents and tourists.
- Create a new website that improve the county’s digital presence, and serves both an effective governmental function as well as serving as an attractive “front door” to the world for new businesses, residents, and tourists looking to discover the county.
- Capitalize on the county’s natural beauty and recreational opportunities through the investment and marketing of county parks, campgrounds, and recreational opportunities.

Operational Performance Metrics^[5]

Implementation of the strategies and tactics above will result in measured improvement to county operations. Some of this improvement is already being measured and has existing targets. Other improvements require the development of targets and collection of baseline data. Recommended performance metrics are below and summarized in Appendix A.

- Meet the 2018 salary schedule commitments for county staff.
- Achieve and maintain a general fund balance equal to 25% of annual operating expenses.
- Maintain the existing Investment Grade rating for the county’s general obligation debt, with improvement from A3 across a 5-year period.
- Request annual return on investment reports from funded partners, and monitor to ensure ROI is steady or growing across multiple year periods.
- Develop baseline data on turnover, resulting in a turnover rate and major reasons for staff turnover.
- Increase non-tax revenue as a portion of overall revenue, supported by grants and fees.
- Create a new website^[6].
- ~~Develop of a county recreation plan to guide investment.~~
- Increase the number of county residents with high-speed internet.
- Create a distinct Richland County brand and marketing platform targeted at tourists and workforce.