



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE 2009

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INTRODUCTION

Given that many of our customers—and perhaps some of our staff—may not be familiar with strategic planning, we have attempted to create a document that explains the processes undertaken and the results in as brief, clear, and user-friendly a form as possible.

Still, it is a complex set of processes, so the purpose of this Introduction is to give readers a plain-language framework for understanding the document.

BACKGROUND - STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is an organization's process of defining its strategy, or direction, and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy, including its capital and people.

Strategies are different from tactics in that they are proactive and not re-active as tactics are; strategies are internal in source and the organization has control over their application.

In many organizations, a strategic plan is viewed as a process for determining where an organization is going over the next year or more – typically 3 to 5 years.

In order to determine where it is going, the organization needs to know exactly where it stands, then determine where it wants to go and how it will get there. The resulting document is called the 'strategic plan.'

All strategic planning deals with at least one (and sometimes all) of three key questions:

1. What do we do?
2. For whom do we do it?
3. How do we excel?

The decision regarding strategic focus comes from gaining an understanding of these questions and their answers.

Strategic plans come in many forms, and range in size from one page to several dozen pages.

BACKGROUND – THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT’S STRATEGIC PLANNING

The **Public Works Department Strategic Plan Update**, in the pages ahead, is presented in two major sections:

- STRATEGIC REVIEW SUMMARY (“EXECUTIVE SUMMARY”)

Written in the form of an Executive Summary, this part provides an overview of the process and the reasoning behind the steps of the review.

The steps included:

1. Determine Where the Department stands:
 - Reviewing (by the Director, the CFO, and Deputy Directors) the Departmental and Division Missions, Values, and Goals in respect to those of the County.
 - Reviewing of each Division Mission in respect to the Departmental Mission.
 - Identifying the Department’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges, and Opportunities (in a strategic review process, this is called a “SWOC”; in this SWOC, trends research is included in the SWOC, which is presented in grid form).

- Conducting interviews with 65 Public Works Department staff regarding Missions, Values, and Goals, which provided “ground truth” to the Executive team’s SWOC review (as well as the Missions, Values, and Goals).
- Identifying representative examples of when the Department has been fully aligned in its missions, values, and goals. This is for the purpose of clearly communicating and illustrating especially for new employees and for the public but also for those who are newer to the Department and may not be aware, what services the Department provides in its provision of public works infrastructure.

2. Determine how the Department will best go forward into the future:

- Reviewing the most pertinent strategic focuses for the Department to consider, given the findings in both the SWOC and the interviews.
- Choosing a primary focus that would, given as many factors as are known and can be considered, help the Department be as strongly positioned as possible to face the challenges in the days and years ahead.
- Creating Action Plans that reflect and support Strategic Focus.

A way to think about how all the processes work together is this:

The SWOC is a snapshot in time of who we are as an organization and what we are grappling with as we do what we do; the Department’s missions, values and goals are why we do what we do and in the way we do it; the Representative Results are a snapshot of what we do in fulfilling the Department’s missions, values and goals; and the Strategic Focus is about what our emphasis will be in order for the department to be successful in grappling with challenges and turning them into opportunities for furthering the missions, values, and goals.

➤ DOCUMENTATION OF PROCESS

A closer look at the review processes and the outcomes. Presented in summary form, this part highlights the findings from reviewing all the input, including the strategic focuses considered and what was ultimately chosen.

Each document from the process is available to interested readers for viewing via hyperlink (at the end of the document).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to provide our community with critical public works services and infrastructure, the Public Works Department maintains a wide range of uniquely qualified staff. In these challenging times, it is critical to ensure that all Department staff are in strong alignment with the County Mission, Goals, and the County's core ACE Values: Accountability, Customer-focus, and Efficiency—that is, that the Department is internally aligned, efficient, and focused on doing what is needed to accomplish the vital tasks and projects associated with fulfilling our mission to the public we serve.

The Department's Executive Team (Director and Deputy Directors) concurred that conducting a Strategic Plan Update would provide a means to ensure the strength of the alignment of the Department both internally and within the framework of the County.

A typical Strategic Plan includes an in-depth review of the tools and processes used to ensure strategies are carried out. Since the County has numerous strategic management tools already well in place, a streamlined "Strategic Alignment Review" was adopted, allowing the Department to maintain a focus on its critical work for the public while conducting a meaningful review that examined the degree of alignment. Such a review was believed to be worthwhile because the degree of alignment directly impacts the degree of effectiveness achieved.

The review process and outcomes consisted of five distinct parts:

1. Reviewing Missions, Values, Goals;
2. Conducting an assessment of departmental Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC);
3. Conducting interviews with a representative cross-section of Public Works Department employees;
4. Determining what area(s) of Strategic Focus would reinforce and ensure alignment; then ranking those Strategic Focus Areas; and finally,
5. Creating Action Plans

Review of the Missions, Values and Goals showed the Department to be strongly aligned, both internally and within the County framework. Evidence of alignment is found in the results the Department has achieved, including the implementing successful pro-active programs, obtaining grant funding that supplements tax dollars, and receiving local, state and national recognition. The combined strengths of institutional knowledge, skill, ability and dedication to serving are key to helping the Department to stay successfully aligned and will support continued high quality service into the future.

Review of research on emerging trends in the Public Works industry showed that one of the most essential challenges facing the Department is one that faces all public works departments in the country: the need for retaining critical institutional knowledge as long-time employees retire or leave. This necessitates a Strategic Focus on—and specific department-wide action to create—a formal Succession Plan, with a concurrent commitment to the development of our workforce via internal cross-divisional projects and targeted, cost-effective training so that they can continue delivering the high level of service that the public has come to expect.

A prime example of how Strategic Focus gives rise to specific action was the decision to dedicate Department staff time and energy to participating in the Pilot County Summer Youth Program (training ten local youth). This was the initial step in the Strategic Action Plan for developing a Succession Plan, with the idea of gaining a baseline understanding of current staff's ability to carry out the fundamental components of a Succession Plan (mentoring and cross training abilities). It also served the additional purpose of helping to create potential future local employees for the Department's workforce by providing area youth with an opportunity to experience jobs they may not have previously considered. The Program was successful on many levels, including the identification of some key staff who have a strong ability to mentor and train with good results.

The Executive Team views the streamlined Strategic Alignment Review process as a tool that could additionally serve as an annual kick off to the Individual Development Plan, Annual Operating Plan, and Capital Improvements Plan processes to ensure ongoing alignment in the years to come.

**DOCUMENTATION OF THE PROCESS:
APPENDIX A – STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW PROCESSES and SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES**

REVIEW PROCESSES

Both process and outcomes consisted of five distinct parts:

1. Reviewing Missions, Values, Goals

A thorough review was conducted of current departmental Mission, Values, and Goals and divisional missions to ensure their alignment with County Mission and Goals from the 2001 County Strategic Plan and the ACE Values.

2. Conducting an assessment of Departmental Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC)

The purpose of this assessment was to allow the Executive Team to reflect on the current position of the Department in relation to the challenges it faces in the days ahead, and to use that assessment to determine what, if any, strategic focus would strengthen alignment.

3. Conducting interviews with a representative cross-section of Department employees

A total of sixty-five of the Department's 308 employees were asked to participate in this part of the process, which occurred concurrently with the Executive Team SWOC. It represented an opportunity to revisit and reaffirm the Missions, Values and Goals with staff, and gain feedback to gain a complementary ground-level perspective to the Executive team's assessment of the Department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. All interviewees received preparatory questions ahead of time.

Questions were designed to ensure that the Department and Divisions' articulated Missions, Values, and Goals are clearly understood and could be related to peoples' day-to-day work (reflecting internal alignment and therefore alignment with the County Mission, Values, and Goals).

4. Determining Strategic Focus Areas to reinforce and ensure alignment; ranking those Focus Areas; and creating and implementing Action Plans

The Executive Team reviewed current research on major trends in the Public Works industry and global trends that are indicators of impending impacts to local governments. This informed the decisions in ranking Strategic Focus areas.

The documents for each of the processes above are listed in and are available for viewing via hyperlink.

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

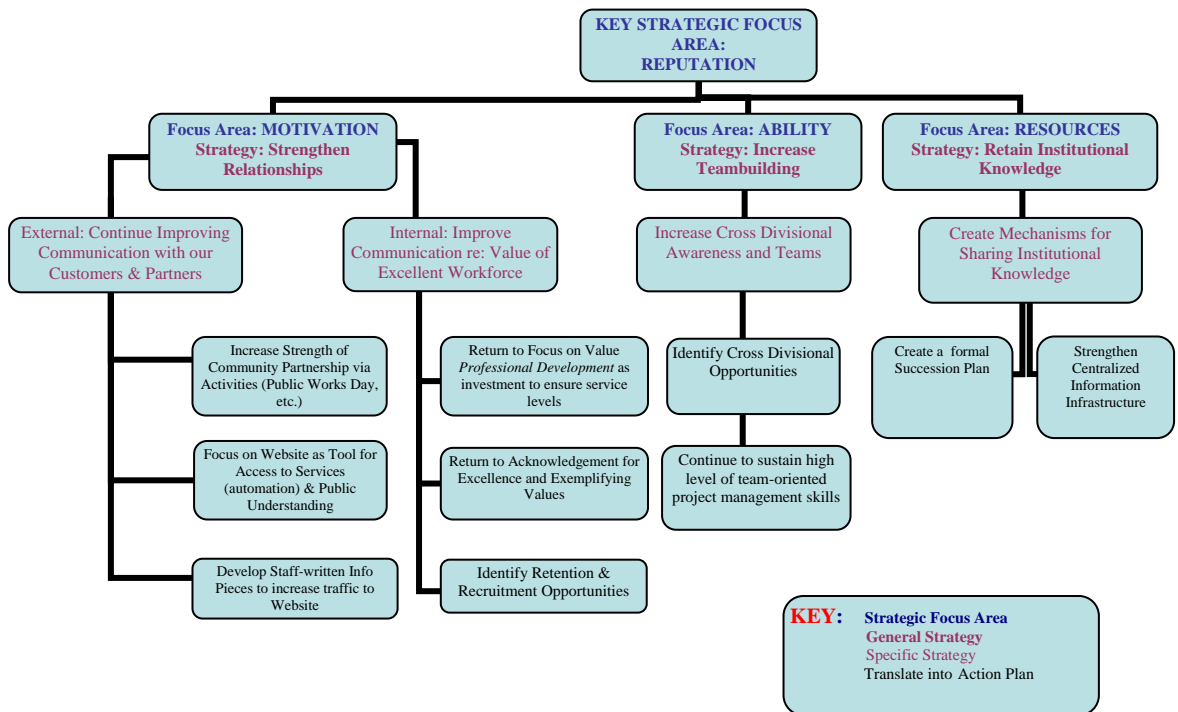
Summary: Findings

- The Department is strongly aligned, both internally and within the County framework. Internal alignment has resulted in an ability to navigate the multitude of regulatory processes which has enabled successful pro-active forward movement in programs; skill in obtaining grant funding that supplements tax dollars; and, with our collaborators, numerous state and national awards, that help place Santa Barbara County in the forefront of California counties. The combination of Institutional Knowledge, skill, ability and dedication to serving the public constitutes the strengths that will help carry the Department successfully into the future.
- The results of the Executive Team's Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Challenges (SWOC) review were consistent with perceptions expressed in the staff interviews.

- The SWOC showed how valuable an asset the Department's staff members are, and that without them, Public Works would be unable to provide the community with the excellent quality of life and the high degree of safety that is enjoyed by our residents and visitors on a daily basis.
- Review of the Trends Research showed that one of the most essential challenges facing the Department is one that faces all public works departments in the country – that is, the need for retaining institutional knowledge as long-time employees retire or leave necessitates action in creating a formal Succession Plan. [See Appendices, "How retirement, recruitment, and retention are impacting the field of public works" from the 2004 APWA Congress and articles from *Public Works Magazine*, January 2008]
- Review of Strategic Focus Areas clarified for the Executive Team that the current strengths of the Department must be preserved for success in serving County residents both now and in the future; commitment of resources should be made with this strategic context as a strong guide.
- It was determined that the key Focus Area should be to maintain results for which the Department is known ("Reputation") that reflect strong Customer Service and Emergency Response Safety levels. The other three Focus Areas, and any specific strategies, should support this.

Below is a small visual representation of the full-sized Appendix *Strategic Focus Ranking for Continued Alignment*. This shows Focus Areas and specific strategies that the Executive Team anticipates will best support the Department's Strategic Alignment for the immediate, foreseeable future.

The Executive Team will continue to meet regularly to develop and implement Action Plans based on the Strategic Focus Areas. The Executive Team will use the Strategic Focus Ranking as a guideline for strategic decisions that respond effectively and efficiently to the Department's mission in the face of California's current economic crisis.



Summary: Updates in Strategies

Review of Strategic Focus Areas clarified for the Executive Team that the current strengths of the Department must be preserved for success in serving County residents both now and in the future. Specific updates to Departmental strategies for ensuring alignment are:

- Nationally, public works departments are facing the need to find ways to do more with fewer resources, and this requires employees who are knowledgeable and skilled, productive and efficient. This does not happen by accident but by design, and therefore, the absence of a formal Succession Plan will be addressed within the year.
- A commitment to the development of our workforce—so that they can continue delivering the high level of service that the public has come to expect—will include increased internal cross-divisional projects and using targeted, cost-effective training.

Summary: Exemplifying Alignment

Given that the purpose of deriving Strategic Updates is to continue or strengthen alignment, clarity about what “alignment” looks like is helpful in communicating or implementing the new strategies.

The clearest demonstration of alignment with the ACE values and Board Strategic Goals should be the Department’s activities and results. However, because of the nature of Public Works as “invisible infrastructure,” such activities and results may not be evident to the general public, but *must* be part of the public’s experience of Public Works.

The following are brief examples taken from a list of activities and results in the Appendices called “Alignment: Achieving Alignment through Mission, Values, Goals” that will be used to help new employees and the public to understand the nature and scope of the Department’s work:

- Web access of Survey documents is provided to the public for easy access to survey information such as Recorded Tract and Parcel maps that are critical to maneuvering through the development process. This information is continually updated and is tracked through performance measurements.
- Utilizing the advanced techniques of Global Positioning Systems technology (GPS), Survey field crews are able to maintain such facilities as Tajiguas Landfill with only one person, eliminating the expense of additional staff and provide surveying services at a fraction of the cost of traditional methods.
- The Transportation Division utilizes a pavement management system (PMS) to identify and schedule the most appropriate surface treatments for County-maintained roads. This system increases efficiency and cost-effectiveness by moving decision-making process away from the traditional ad hoc, “worst first” approach of spending maintenance funds. Using a Pavement Management System, the Transportation Division has revitalized County roads at a fraction of the cost of the traditional method of removing and replacing the asphalt.
- The Transportation Division’s Pavement Preservation Program has been the subject of articles in nationally distributed industry publications and has received awards such as the Pavement Preservation Task Group’s 2008 Program of the Year Award.
- Pro-active safety measures are an extremely high priority for the Water Resources Division, and such activities supplement ongoing maintenance to ensure the public’s well being in times of flood-related disasters. For example, in response to the Gap fire, the division’s crew cleared 16 miles of creek channels with the help of County Fire crews, and Public Works Transportation Division crews. Division crews also placed 5 debris racks, aerial-hydr mulched about 1000 acres of burned watershed, and readied the Airport Sediment Basins for the winter. Following the Tea fire that struck in November, crews again cleared creek channels, installed a debris rack, cleared out an abandoned debris basin in Parma Park, and expanded the availability of sandbags to residents.

Summary: Exemplifying Alignment (continued)

- The County Water Agency, on behalf of 14 other agencies (participants in a Regional Water Conservation Program, IRWMP), recently received a \$25 Million Prop 50 grant from the State. The Water Agency is the regional governance structure that works with the State, and the fund flows through the Water Agency. Recipients include the City of Santa Maria, Laguna Sanitation District, the City of Carpinteria, and the Carpinteria Sanitation District.
- The Department's Disaster Recovery Manager created a Procurement Plan for Disasters, making Santa Barbara County the first county in California to create such a template (we are frequently contacted to offer guidance to other counties on creating such a document).
- The County is also the first in California to have secured the cooperation of every city in our county in a Mutual Aid Agreement.
- The County recently achieved a 69% State-certified diversion rate: the efforts of the community and the Department working together places our county in the top 10% in California and at the forefront of the nation's diversion efforts.
- The Resource Recovery Division earned the Gold Excellence Award from the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) two years in a row: first for the County's overall Integrated Waste Management system, and then for its innovative Marketing in the Green Waste Awareness campaign.

**DOCUMENTATION OF THE PROCESS:
SECTION B – LIST OF PROCESS DOCUMENTS, SOURCE DOCUMENTS, AND RESEARCH**

PROCESS DOCUMENTS

1. ALIGNMENT FOCUS: MISSION
[COMPARING DEPARTMENT MISSION WITH COUNTY MISSION](#)
2. ALIGNMENT FOCUS: VALUES
[COMPARING DEPARTMENT VALUES WITH COUNTY VALUES](#)
3. ALIGNMENT FOCUS: OVERARCHING GOALS
[COMPARING DEPARTMENT GOALS WITH COUNTY GOALS](#)
4. ALIGNMENT FOCUS: [STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES \(SWOC\)](#)
(INCLUDING TRENDS) IN RELATION TO DEPARTMENTAL OVERARCHING GOALS
5. [PREPARATORY QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS](#)
6. [SUMMARY OF FOCUS AREAS AND ISSUE AREAS](#)
7. [STRATEGIC FOCUS RANKING FOR CONTINUED ALIGNMENT \(CHART\)](#)
8. SPECIFIC RESULTS ACHIEVED BY THE DEPARTMENT THAT REFLECT ALIGNMENT
[Representative List of Awards](#)
[Representative List of Grants](#)
Representative Results By Division:
 - [Administration](#)
 - [Resource Recovery & Waste Management](#)
 - [Surveyor](#)
 - [Transportation](#)
 - [Water Resources](#)
9. [UPDATED DIRECTOR'S PAGE FOR WEBSITE](#)
10. MATERIALS TO BE USED FOR NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATIONS (hard copy in Department Library)
 - Achieving Public Works Department Goals: A Values-Based Approach
 - Examples of Values Alignment from Interviews
 - Who are Public Works Department Customers: A Representative List

SOURCE DOCUMENTS

[SANTA BARBARA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC PLAN, OCTOBER 2, 2001](#)

[ACE \(Accountability - Customer Focus - Efficiency\) Values](#)

RESEARCH SOURCES

- ["Government 2020 and the perpetual collaboration mandate: Six worldwide drivers demand customized strategies," IBM Global Business Services White Paper, June, 2008.](#)
- ["Report Identifies Six Megatrends Reshaping Governments," summary overview of Government 2020 document, June 2008.](#)

- ["Global Trends affecting the Public Sector," Michael Barber, Alastair Levy, and Lenny Mendonca, McKinsey & Company \(consultancy\), online article, 2007.](#)
- ["Retaining and Growing Talent," Frank Benest, former manager of Palo Alto, CA/ and chair, Cal-ICMA Coaching Program; *Public Management Magazine*, October 2008.](#)
- ["Academies Nurture the Best and Brightest in science and math...get the word out about public works careers," Brenda Herrman and Lisa Harris, *APWA Reporter*, September 2008.](#)
- ["A second chance at a dream career: instead of retiring, study says, a new wave of people are switching to public-service work for fun and profit," Maria L. LaGanga, *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 2008.](#)
- ["The Replacements: Becoming the employer of choice for younger generations," Victoria K. Sicaras, *Public Works Magazine*, May 2008.](#)
- ["Looking Younger: The City of Tempe finds success in recruiting younger workers to help fill the void being left by a stream of early retirements," Ken Wysocky, *Municipal Sewer & Water\(MSW\) Magazine*, January 2008.](#)
- ["The best defense: Budget-savvy managers go on the offense by revving up cross training and information-management effort," Special Report/Operational Initiative, *Public Works Magazine*, January 2008.](#)
- [Succession management planning, Ron Hellbusch, *APWA*, 2005](#)
- ["The Great Escape: How retirement, recruitment, and retention are impacting the field of public works," Dr. John F. Luthy, Presenter, 2004 APWA Congress; *APWA Reporter* \(online\), 2004.](#)
- ["Baby Boomers Envision Retirement II - Key Findings," *AARP Study*, May 2004.](#)
- ["Today is the Tomorrow You Worried About Yesterday: Meeting the Challenges of a Changing Workforce," Nancy B. Kiyonaga, *International Public Management Association*, Winter 2004.](#)
- ["For Managers, Too: Web 2.0 and the Changing Roles of PIOs," Norm Wigington, *Public Management Magazine*, October 2008.](#)
- ["New SHRM \[Society of Human Resources Managers\] Report Highlights Trends in Employee Benefits, job Satisfaction," SHRM website, June 2009.](#)
- ["Making the Case for Employee Recognition in Tough Times," Roy Saunderson, President of the Recognition Management Institute, March 2, 2009.](#)
- [Trends in Employee Recognition" – WorldAtWork Survey, April 2008](#)
- [Workforce Planning in Public Sector, Overview, Various](#)

D. OTHER RESOURCES

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS: A GUIDE TO STRENGTHENING AND SUSTAINING ORGANIZATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT, 3rd Edition, John M. Bryson, 2004.

"Generational Diversity," from Liebert Cassidy Whitmore's publication and seminars on DIVERSITY, 2008. (hard copy in Department Library)