

CONDITION A - CONDITION B: WHY DO WE DO STRATEGIC PLANNING?

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Over the past several months I have been asked by many people whether we are going to continue the strategic planning effort because of the current budget situation. Others have raised questions about how the plan relates to the individual jobs of front line workers in the County. Because the process of planning can become very complex very quickly, I thought I would try to simplify the subject by focusing on its underlying purpose and core elements, as I see them.

There are three statements I often use in my speeches that are apropos to this discussion:

1. If you don't know where you are going, any path will get you there.
2. Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't – you are right.
3. The only sustaining quality of any successful organization is its ability to learn (and a learning organization is one that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future).

Our strategic planning effort in the County is all about taking control of our future by changing conventional thinking, changing conventional behavior and changing results.

In 1998 we began this journey of transformation by asking ourselves:

What is our vision of the future?
What kind of County organization do we want?
What behaviors will we expect from ourselves?
How will we know when we arrive at our destination?

In my mind, this is a process of moving from Condition A (where we are) to Condition B (where we want to be). The short hand version is as follows:

CONDITION A

Personal Power Model
Silo Thinking
Reactive
Needs-Based
Logical
Past-Referenced
Independent
Inputs/Outputs
Mechanistic

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CONDITION B

Collaboration
Systems Thinking
Proactive
Strengths-Based
Creative
Future-Oriented
Interdependent
Results/Outcomes
Learning Organization

The strategic plan's basic purpose is to transform the culture of the Los Angeles County organization. As complicated as the details of any plan may be, our success will be apparent when we:

- Collaborate with each other and stakeholders when solving our problems.
- When our actions reflect our stated values.
- When we can positively answer the question with respect to our services: *Is anyone better off as a result of our intervention?*
- When every employee is enrolled in helping us achieve Condition B.

There is an inherent presumption in Condition B that it will:

1. Result in more cost-effective services because people are working together.
2. Result in better decisions about those services.
3. Result in better outcomes because services are interdependent.
4. Result in better interactions with people we serve, and thus improve respect for government and enhance its legitimacy.

Now, how do you move an organization with 85,000 employees, 37 departments, five elected Supervisors who are responsible for both legislation and administration, and an elected Sheriff, District Attorney and Assessor? As I see it, one way to accomplish that is through a **strategic planning process** that:

- ✓ Adopts a vision and a set of values.
- ✓ Defines a mission.
- ✓ Establishes goals and objectives.
- ✓ Measures results.
- ✓ Shares and celebrates our progress.

We have done some of those things and are well on our way to doing them all:

- ❖ Our vision is to “improve the quality of life in Los Angeles County...”
- ❖ Our mission is “to enrich lives through effective and caring service.”
- ❖ Our four organizational goals are:
 1. **Service Excellence:** Provide the public with easy access to quality information and services that are both beneficial and responsive.
 2. **Workforce Excellence:** Enhance the quality and productivity of County workforce.
 3. **Organizational Effectiveness:** Ensure that service delivery systems are efficient, effective and goal-oriented.
 4. **Fiscal Responsibility:** Strengthen the County’s fiscal capacity.
- ❖ Our four program goals cover the work we do in the County:
 5. **Children and Family Services:** Improve the well-being of children and families in Los Angeles County as measured by the achievements in the five outcome areas adopted by the Board: good health; economic well-being; safety and survival; social and emotional well-being; and educational/workforce readiness.
 6. **Community Services:** Improve the quality of life for the residents of Los Angeles County’s unincorporated communities by offering a wide range of department coordinated services responsive to each community’s specific needs.
 7. **Health and Mental Health:** Implement a client-centered, information-based health and mental health services delivery

system that provides cost-effective and quality services across County departments.

8. **Public Safety:** Increase the safety and security of all residents in Los Angeles County through well-coordinated, comprehensive response and recovery plans for terrorist incidents.

Our **VALUES** are:

A can-do attitude: We approach each challenge believing that together a solution can be achieved.

Accountability: We accept responsibility for the decisions we make and the actions we take.

Compassion: We treat those we serve and each other in a kind and caring manner.

Commitment: We always go the extra mile to achieve our mission.

Integrity: We act consistent with our values.

Professionalism: We perform to a high standard of excellence.

Respect for diversity: We value the uniqueness of every individual and their perspectives.

Responsiveness: We take the action needed in a timely manner.

Performance Counts! (PC!) addresses the next element of the plan. How do we know when we reach our destination? *PC!* is a new format for reporting performance measures that each department will now include in the annual budget, but it is not just a performance reporting format. It is a major step forward in changing the focus of the County from simply assuring that services we provide are being delivered efficiently to assessing and reporting the results of those services on the lives of residents of Los Angeles County.

- OPERATIONAL measures will help us understand where we need to focus our improvement efforts in the organization—both within departments and between departments who share responsibility for producing a specific result.

- PROGRAM indicators will help us understand whether we need to modify our intervention or make policy changes in the programs we provide -- either at the departmental or inter-departmental level.

There is not an employee in our organization or, for that matter, any of our partners and stakeholders, who do not share in the responsibility for transforming the culture of Los Angeles County.

If we behave in a way that:

- *Shows respect and concern for our clients and each other;*
- *Continuously examines our processes and the results of our services;*
- *Values collaboration and teamwork; and*
- *Holds ourselves accountable for our actions,*

Then, we will have created Condition B.

You will be hearing more about the plan and its purpose as we continue to work at making our vision come true. I hope this message, however, provides you with all you need to know to begin right now to help us in that effort.