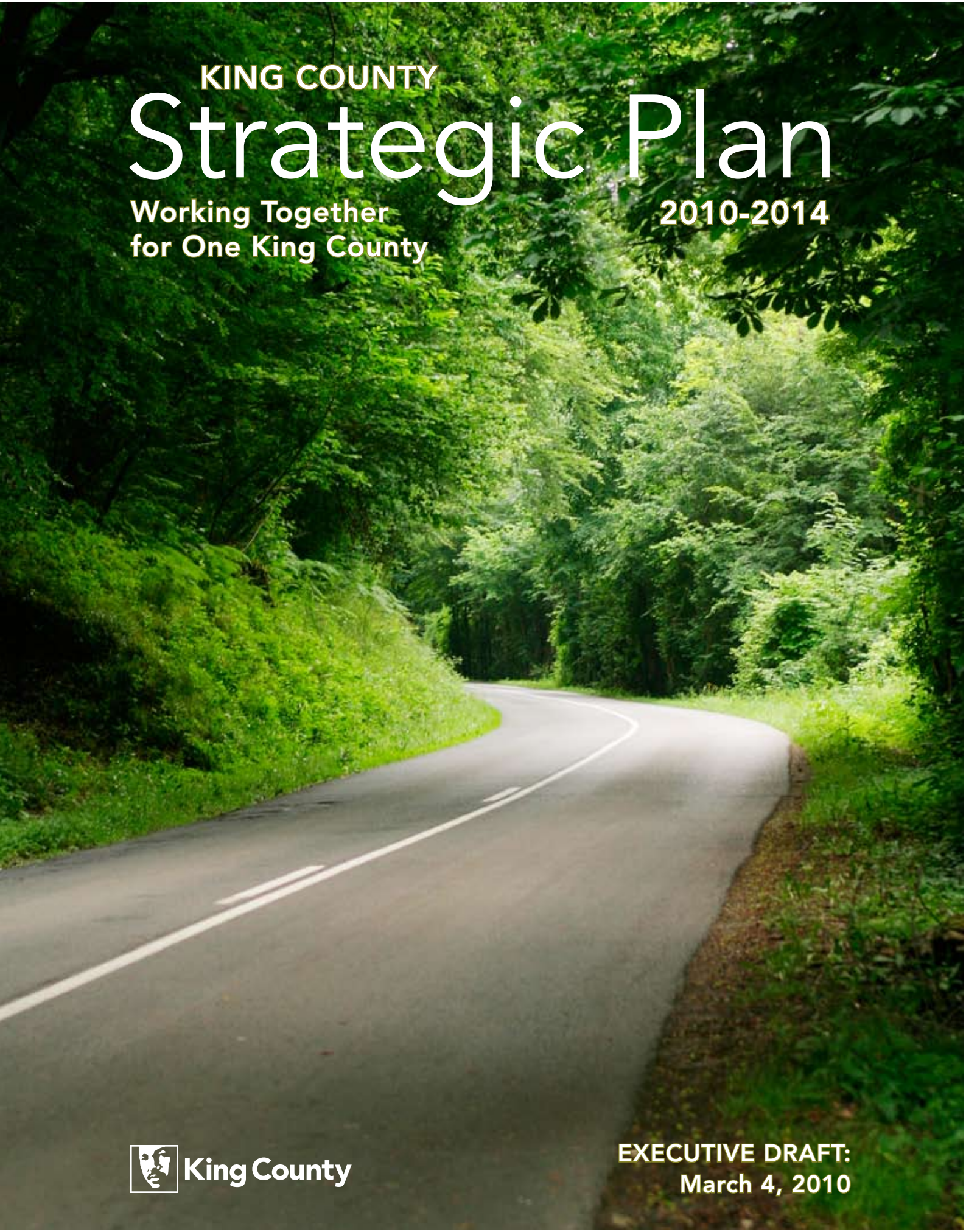
KING COUNTY

Strategic Plan

Working Together
for One King County

2010-2014



King County

EXECUTIVE DRAFT:
March 4, 2010

Dear Friends,

Upon taking office in November one of my first priorities was to examine the first draft of this countywide strategic plan and engage my new administration in developing immediate priorities that guide our reforms of county government.

After broad outreach, this plan reflects the values of the people of King County. This plan focuses on results, not process. This plan calls for customer service, efficiency in government and robust partnerships across the region. This is the plan that, when completed, can frame our work to change the way we do business in King County.

This is also the first time that we have a plan that embodies the values of all the separately-elected officials in King County government.

However, this is still not the final draft. In the coming months I will be working with the King County Council, other separately elected officials, and with people like you, to make this a plan that we can effectively implement in every aspect of county government. At the end of the day, this plan has value only if it improves the services that are received by you, our customer.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

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Introduction

Why a strategic plan?

Strategic planning is a process by which an organization assesses how it is doing, figures out where it wants to go, and charts a path to get from here to there. Planning provides the basis on which organizations make decisions about how to improve and navigate a path to a better future. Strategic plans help define important goals, set specific directions, and clarify policy and budget priorities.

More specifically, given its many legal requirements, complex funding structure, limited revenue growth and increasing demands for service, King County is at a critical juncture and needs a plan to provide a consolidated strategic direction for the future.

How will the plan be used?

Although King County has three branches of government and multiple elected officials, this plan represents a significant countywide effort to work together as a single county government. Moreover, it is intended to speak to and include something for a variety of audiences.

For the public, this plan is meant to:

- Communicate the county's vision and show our intended direction and emphasis over the next five years
- Reflect your ideas and suggestions for services that are important or need improvement
- Signify our commitment to customer satisfaction
- Serve as a baseline to show progress and allow you to hold us accountable for our actions and principles over time

For cities, businesses, and community organizations, this plan is additionally meant to:

- Reflect our commitment to working with you as partners in helping to achieve community goals

For King County officials, managers, and employees, the plan is additionally meant to:

- Align county employees, services and programs with high-level goals
- Inform policy, operational, and budget decisions
- Provide a structure to ensure oversight and management of county programs and services
- Create a countywide planning framework to guide subsequent plans

This plan is designed to be realized over a five-year period. Not all of the suggested strategies will be able to be accomplished in the first years of the plan. Given the county's constrained resources, King County will have to prioritize among the various strategies. This prioritization will be made more explicit in the final version of the plan due to the Metropolitan King County Council on May 1, 2010.

Although the plan is designed to inform the annual budget process, inclusion in this plan does not guarantee a specific level of funding. Constraints resulting from mandated services, existing funding levels, and other fiscal requirements will limit the county's ability to fund everything in this plan in any given year. Given the aspirational nature of many of the goals and objectives, it is clear that many of these issues will not be completed or resolved in a five year time horizon and will likely be included in the next plan covering 2015-2020.

How was the initial draft of the plan developed?

"I am so happy to be able to have you hear our opinions."

-- Focus group participant for whom English is a second language

Throughout 2009 the Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management collected input from many sources through a variety of ways. This process included:

- a countywide survey of residents that asked about their satisfaction with King County services, their priorities for service, and how they think decisions should be made;
- public workshops in four locations across the county at which residents shared their vision for the county and their priorities for service;
- on-going meetings with the county's elected officials during which they developed and endorsed a new mission, vision and set of guiding principles for the county;
- a survey of all King County employees that asked them about how King County services could be improved and about their job satisfaction;
- a meeting with leadership from many of the county's thirty-nine cities to get feedback on how the county can better partner with and serve cities;
- workshops with communities that are frequently under-represented in more traditional outreach efforts; and,
- other input opportunities including an online survey, space to comment online and questions included in the July round of the Countywide Community Forums program.

After witnessing and studying this enormous amount of input, in addition to consulting existing plans and identifying county strengths and weaknesses with internal staff, the Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management developed a public review draft of the countywide strategic plan.

Elected in November of 2009, County Executive Dow Constantine made it one of his administration's first priorities to complete the countywide strategic plan and develop a plan of action to the make the plan a reality. Input from the new Executive leadership team, as well as input from the public review process, allowed for the creation of this new, revised draft of the countywide strategic plan.

"Thank you, everybody wants to be heard, this is critical information for us to be involved in."

-- King County employee

What challenges does King County face, both inside and outside the organization?

Prior to setting goals and strategies for the future, it is important for an organization to identify what the state of the world is today and what challenges we are currently facing.

King County faces many challenges both within and outside the organization. The goals and strategies articulated later in the plan are intended to address these challenges and move the county toward its vision.

EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

- **Fiscal constraints:** King County has and will continue to face significant budget gaps for the foreseeable future. These budget gaps result in large part from state and federal revenue limitations. In this era of limited resources, the county will need to identify how to continue to provide services to a growing population. Recent national economic problems have increased the severity of the fiscal issues faced by the county, but even full economic recovery will not fully resolve the county's long-term fiscal constraints.
- **Lack of trust in government:** All governments face challenges restoring the public's trust and establishing better accountability to residents. King County is no different. Transparency and accountability will be central to achieving the desired outcomes of the strategic plan.
- **Changing customer base and expectations:** King County's customers are changing in several important ways. Demographic changes mean King County is serving a more diverse population than ever before. King County now has 23 percent of its population speaking English as a second language with up to 100 different languages spoken. Gaps continue to grow in terms of income, and seniors make up a great portion of our population than ever before. Changes in technology and other innovations are leading to changing customer expectations for how government services are delivered.

- **King County's regional and local roles:** King County faces challenges in its roles as both a regional and local service provider. King County's local responsibilities are shifting more heavily to the rural areas as urban unincorporated areas annex to cities. Meanwhile, King County's role as a regional provider of services, such as transit and criminal justice, has grown more complex as the region has grown. These changes have had significant impacts on both King County's revenue streams and service delivery.
- **Threats to human and environmental health:** King County is facing an increasingly complex and diverse array of large scale threats of natural and human origin—from more immediate threats like the influenza pandemic and Green River flooding to longer-term issues like saving Puget Sound and protecting ourselves from the impacts of climate change. These are long-term issues that require the county to act with urgency in the short-term while proactively assessing risk and planning for future disasters, health threats, and environmental changes.

INTERNAL CHALLENGES

- **Customer service and satisfaction:** Community members highlighted a number of areas in which King County could improve customer service and satisfaction. Most notable was the fact that many residents have difficulty getting in contact with the right person at King County who can help them. Other areas for improvement include issues with specific services, access to services, and language barriers.
- **Regional partnerships:** King County's regional role means the county needs to work in close partnership with cities. This critical need for partnerships hasn't always been adequately recognized by the county. Cities specifically noted that they would like King County to better partner by playing a variety of roles including regional convener, equal partner, and regional leader.

- **Coordination across diverse service areas and agencies:** As a large, complex organization with numerous lines of business, it has been challenging for the county to find ways to efficiently and effectively work across departments and agencies toward a common purpose. County employees and the public both told us that they expected us to work more collaboratively as a single organization.
- **Lack of public understanding of what King County does:** One of the major findings from our community survey work was that a large number of county residents were generally unfamiliar with the breadth and diversity of county services and programs. This has implications for how we deliver services, levels of service we can provide, our funding, and our standing or reputation in the community.
- **Engagement with employees:** County employees want more meaningful ways to shape the direction and quality of county services. Employees feel they have positive contributions to make in ensuring programs are managed more effectively and efficiently.

King County's challenges are both complex and wide-reaching. Developing ways to manage and address these issues is the only way King County will be able to achieve its goals on behalf of the community over the next five years. The proposed solutions to these challenges are the focus of this strategic plan.

King County Responsibilities

Under the King County Charter, King County is the regional service provider to all county residents and the local service provider to residents in the unincorporated areas. The table below lists many of the services King County currently provides.

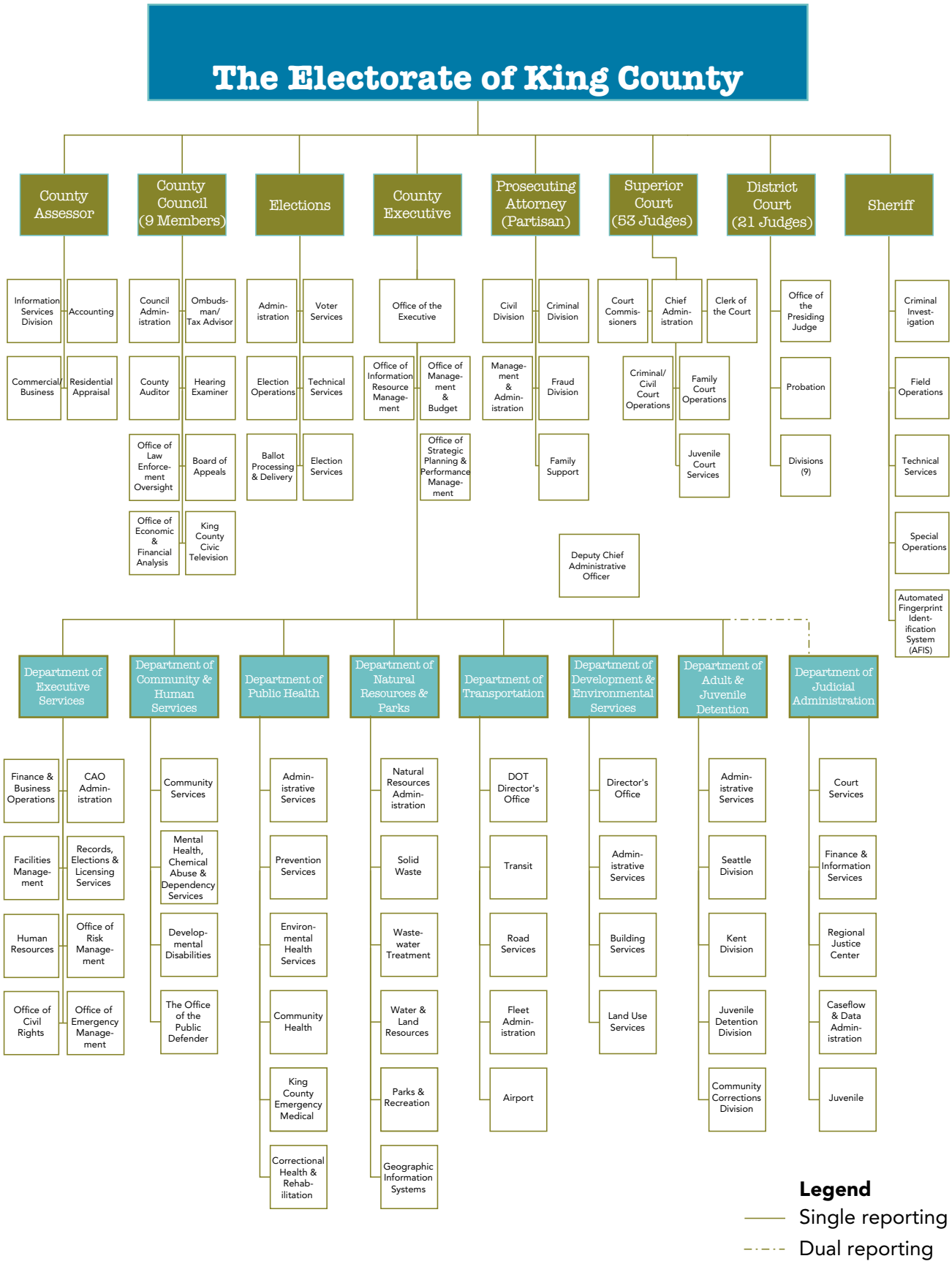
Regional Services
for all King County residents

- Affordable housing and homeless programs
- Civil rights enforcement for housing, employment, public accommodations, and contracting
- Elections
- Emergency-911 telephone system
- Emergency management
- Emergency medical services (EMS)
- Employment and job training for youth and adults
- Flood control services
- Growth management planning
- Human services for children, youth and families, seniors, domestic violence survivors, sexual assault victims, individuals with developmental disabilities and veterans and their families
- Jail (adult secure detention) for felons and alternatives to detention
- Juvenile Court
- Juvenile detention and alternatives to detention
- King County International Airport (Boeing Field)
- Legal records for property and marriage
- Licensing – vehicle, vessel, marriage, and taxicab
- Mental health and substance abuse treatment
- Metro Transit
- Property tax assessment and relief; collection and distribution to taxing districts
- Prosecutor
- Public defense for individuals accused of felony crimes
- Public health, including disease control/prevention
- Public health clinics
- Public records
- Regional economic development
- Regional parks and trails
- Regional Sheriff services, including search & rescue and automated fingerprint identification system
- Regional wastewater treatment
- Salmon recovery and watershed management
- Solid waste management, including Cedar Hills landfill
- Specialized courts – mental health, drug, and family
- Superior Court including felony matters, family law and juvenile justice matters

Local Services
for unincorporated King County residents (and by contract for some cities)

- Agriculture and forestry services
- Animal care and control
- Building and land use code enforcement
- Building permits and inspections
- District Court including misdemeanor offenses, traffic violations, protection orders
- Jail (adult secure detention) for misdemeanants
- Economic development
- Fire inspections
- Local land use and zoning
- Local parks with swimming and limited youth programming
- Roads and bridges
- Sheriff
- Surface water and storm water management

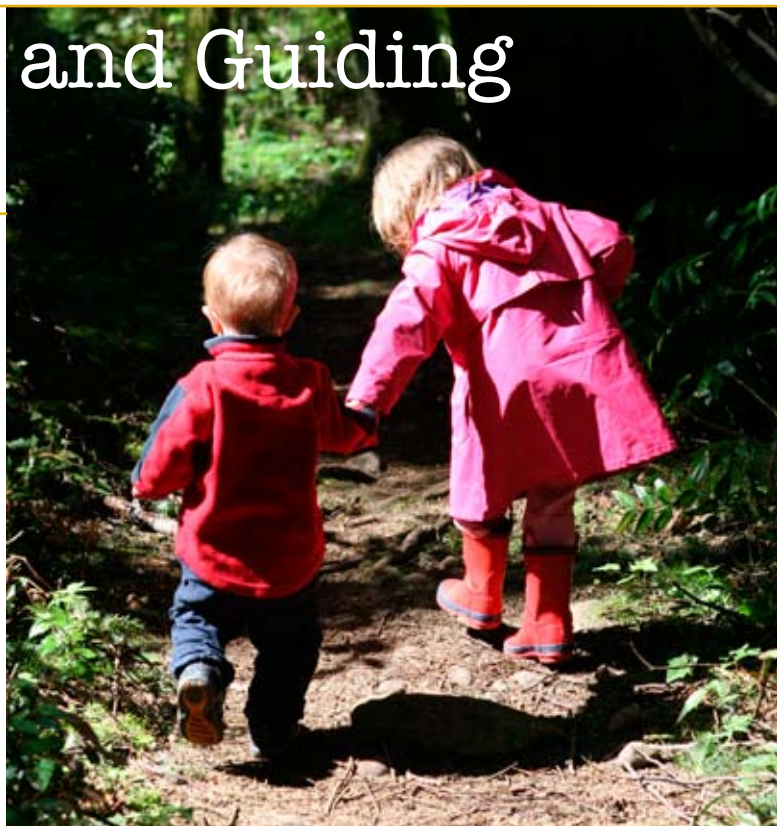
For additional services or further information on any of the above, visit
http://your.kingcounty.gov/services.htm



2010 King County Organization

Government Organization
Elected Officials, Departments & Divisions

Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles



Although King County's branches of government perform different roles and have different responsibilities, King County's elected leaders and employees are all guided by the following countywide mission, vision and guiding principles. These foundational tenets will guide the work of county employees across all branches of government.

The vision statement concerns King County as a region, and cannot be achieved through the efforts of King County government alone. The mission statement and guiding principles speak explicitly to King County government's role in realizing the shared vision. All three apply to King County's role as both a regional and local service provider. While specific goals and strategies may differ across the county's regional and local responsibilities, the mission, vision and guiding principles are inherent in everything we do.

Vision Statement

King County: a diverse and dynamic community with a healthy economy and environment where people and businesses have the opportunity to thrive.

Mission Statement

The mission of King County government is to provide regional leadership and fiscally responsible, high-quality core services for a healthy, safe, and vibrant community.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles are values that reflect our beliefs about the roles and responsibilities of our county government:

- ***Service-oriented*** *– We listen and respond to our customers in a culturally responsive way and prioritize their satisfaction as we do our work.*
- ***Results-focused*** *– We establish community driven goals, measure our performance, and report to the public on our success in meeting those goals.*
- ***Accountable*** *– We are responsive and transparent to the public in our roles, functions and actions as individuals and as a government.*
- ***Innovative*** *– We are creative, learn from experience and results, and seek out new and efficient ways to solve problems and serve the public.*
- ***Professional*** *– We uphold the high standards, skills, competence, and integrity of our professions in doing the work of King County government.*
- ***Fair and Just*** *– We serve all residents of King County by promoting fairness and opportunity and eliminating inequities.*

Goals and Strategies

The goals and strategies of the strategic plan are the framework that will guide King County departments and agencies for the next five years, and beyond.

The strategic plan includes two types of goals: (1) "what" goals that articulate what King County intends to accomplish or services it intends to provide, and (2) "how" goals that articulate how King County intends to conduct its work. In general, "what" goals relate to the services provided to the public (such as bus service), and the "how" goals speak to the internal aspects of services (such as cost-efficiency).

While our goals describe the results we intend to achieve through the implementation of this plan, they are also intended to be enduring in that they may continue to be our goals beyond the five-year lifespan of this plan. They are meant to reflect the breadth of King County's responsibilities and our role as both a regional and local service provider.

The "what we deliver" goals are:

- **Justice and Safety.** Support safe communities and accessible justice systems for all.
- **Health and Human Potential.** Provide equitable opportunities for all individuals to realize their full potential.
- **Economic Growth and Built Environment.** Encourage vibrant, economically thriving and sustainable communities.
- **Environmental Sustainability.** Safeguard and enhance King County's natural resources and environment.

The "how we deliver" goals are:

- **Service Excellence.** Establish a culture of customer service and deliver services that are responsive to community needs.
- **Financial Stewardship.** Exercise sound financial management and build King County's long-term fiscal strength.
- **Public Engagement.** Promote robust public engagement that informs, involves, and empowers people and communities.
- **Quality Workforce.** Develop and empower King County government's most valuable asset, our employees.

While admirable, these goals are not sufficient in and of themselves to trigger action. Consequently, each is supported by several priority objectives and strategies that articulate the courses of action for achieving the overall goals. These objectives and strategies are King County's action plan. Finally, a sound implementation plan and measurement framework that establishes accountability and tracks performance will ensure that the strategic plan generates concrete results.

There are many linkages and ways in which the goals and strategies are interrelated. Promoting health and human potential will have implications for the criminal justice system; how our built environment is organized has an impact on environmental sustainability; a quality workforce is necessary to providing service excellence. By advancing one particular objective or strategy we intend to have an impact on multiple goals.

Strategic plans are an opportunity to take stock, look forward, and prepare for the future. These goals, objectives and strategies reflect the priorities of King County residents, employees and leadership. They are designed to guide budget and policy decisions moving forward, making sure the most important issues are addressed. As conditions change, the plan will remain a key source of strategic direction.

Justice & Safety

Goal: Support safe communities and accessible justice systems for all

Objective 1. Keep people safe in their homes and communities

Strategies

a. Maintain a proactive law enforcement presence in unincorporated communities and cities with whom we contract

b. Maintain safe and secure county-owned infrastructure, including roads, bridges, buses, transit facilities, parks and buildings such as courts

c. Provide programs and support for individuals exposed to violence

d. Provide rapid emergency response

e. Collaborate with local jurisdictions to define and provide regional law, safety and justice services

f. Enforce building and land-use codes in unincorporated areas

Objective 2. Ensure fair and accessible justice systems

Strategies

a. Eliminate barriers to court access

b. Prosecute accused individuals fairly and efficiently

c. Manage and resolve court cases in a timely manner

d. Ensure the availability of public defenders to those who need them

e. Provide therapeutic courts, such as mental health and drug courts

Objective 3. Ensure offending individuals are appropriately detained or sanctioned

Strategies

a. Maintain adequate levels of secure detention for violent and repeat offenders

b. Operate secure and humane detention facilities that comply with legal and regulatory requirements

c. Provide a continuum of jail diversion programs, such as education and treatment

d. Provide alternatives to secure detention to appropriate offenders

Objective 4. Decrease damage or harm in the event of a regional crisis

Strategies

a. Undertake regional emergency planning and preparedness activities, including education and coordination

b. Coordinate and provide direct response to crises such as communicable disease outbreaks, floods, earthquakes, severe weather events, and homeland security threats

Health & Human Potential

Goal: Promote opportunities for all communities and individuals to realize their full potential.

Objective 1. Increase the number of healthy years that residents live

Strategies

a. Initiate, implement and coordinate programs that prevent the leading causes of poor health and premature death, including injuries and violence

b. Ensure access to affordable, appropriate and quality physical and behavioral health services

c. Provide education that promotes individual health

d. Implement policies and interventions to reduce health disparities

Objective 2. Protect the health of communities

Strategies

a. Ensure the safety of food, air and water

b. Make healthy choices easy choices through policy, system and environment changes

c. Monitor and improve environmental quality and reduce exposure to hazardous materials

Objective 3. Support the optimal growth and development of children and youth

Strategies

a. Support prevention and early intervention programs for children and youth most at-risk

b. Build partnerships with local and regional education systems to enhance their programs

c. Provide or contract for behavioral health and human services designed to meet the unique developmental needs of children and youth

Objective 4. Ensure a network of integrated and effective health and human services is available to people in need

Strategies

a. Facilitate access to programs that reduce or prevent involvement in the criminal justice, crisis mental health and emergency medical systems, and promote stability for individuals currently involved in those systems

b. Support partnerships to deliver integrated and effective services to people in need

c. Join with local and regional partners to prevent and reduce homelessness for families and individuals

Economic Growth and Built Environment

Goal: Encourage a growing and diverse King County economy and vibrant, thriving and sustainable communities.

Objective 1. Support a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy

Strategies

a. Promote regional economic development through partnerships with regional organizations, other jurisdictions, and the private sector

b. Support workforce development programs for adults and youth

c. Create contracting opportunities for small, local, and disadvantaged businesses

d. Maintain infrastructure that facilitates the efficient movement of freight and goods to promote trade across the region

e. Promote a quality of life that attracts a talented workforce and businesses to the region

Objective 2. Meet the growing need for transportation services and facilities throughout the county

Strategies

a. Focus transportation resources to support density and growth

b. Coordinate and develop services for an integrated and seamless regional transportation system

c. Meet the transportation needs of low-income and other under-served populations

d. Enhance bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure as alternative transportation options

Objective 3. Shape a built environment that allows communities to flourish

Strategies

a. Partner within the public and private sectors to ensure the availability of a wide range of affordable housing and supportive services

b. Acquire and maintain regional parks, trails, and open space

c. Support community infrastructure and land-use planning that is responsive to community needs and promotes access to businesses, services, and schools

Objective 4. Preserve the unique character of our rural communities

Strategies

a. Manage growth to limit urban sprawl

b. Encourage stewardship of rural landscapes including agricultural and forest land

c. Promote policies and programs that sustain rural lifestyles

d. Support rural economic development that maintains the character of the rural area

Environmental Sustainability

Goal: Safeguard and enhance King County's natural resources and environment.

Objective 1. Protect and restorebiodiversity, open space, and ecosystems

Strategies

a. Focus development within the Urban Growth Area

b. Use a combination of incentives, technical assistance and use regulations to promote desirable environmental practices by individuals and businesses

c. Support maintenance and acquisition of open space and natural areas

d. Reduce, safely dispose of, and create resources from wastewater and solid waste

e. Protect water quality

f. Collaborate to restore Puget Sound and protect vulnerable, threatened and endangered species

g. Collaborate with local governments, home and business owners and community groups to control pollution at its source

h. Encourage the use of low-impact development practices

Objective 2. Encourage sustainable agricultural and forestry

Strategies

a. Utilize landowner incentives to keep land in agricultural and forestry use

b. Provide incentives, technical assistance, and streamlined permitting for farm and forestry practices that minimize environmental impacts

Objective 3. Reduce climate pollution and prepare for the effects of climate change on the environment, human health, and the economy

Strategies

a. Promote collaborative efforts among local governments to address climate change

b. Advocate for and participate in the development of federal, state, and regional climate response strategies

c. Adapt to the impacts of climate change on natural systems, human health, and infrastructure

d. Advance policies and programs that simultaneously reduce climate pollution and improve health

Objective 4. Minimize King County's operational environmental footprint

Strategies

a. Incorporate sustainable development practices into the design, construction and operation of county facilities and county-funded projects

b. Provide environmentally responsible services, including transportation and fleet operations

c. Encourage King County employees to reduce their environmental impact

Service Excellence

Goal: Establish a culture of customer service and deliver services that are responsive to community needs.

Objective 1. Improve our customers' satisfaction with King County

Strategies

a. Make customer service a primary focus for all county employees

b. Gather customer feedback regarding service delivery and report results as part of the county's performance management system

c. Improve local service delivery

Objective 2. Build a culture of performance and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of county programs, services, and systems

Strategies

a. Implement a unified management system for county operations including budgeting, performance management, service delivery, and strategic planning

b. Adopt new technologies and processes that allow county agencies to work more effectively and efficiently

c. Establish accountability at every level of service delivery

d. Provide cost-effective, accountable, and responsive internal services

Objective 3. Foster an ethic of working together for One King County

Strategies

a. Engage in partnerships to solve problems, expand services, and inform decision-making

b. Define King County's role in regional issues as a leader, equal partner, participant, or facilitator

c. Actively participate in and strengthen regional organizations and policy bodies

d. Strengthen King County's collaborative role with cities and communities

e. Improve collaboration internally, including among the county's elected leadership, across departments, and with employees

Objective 4. Increase access to King County services, personnel, and information

Strategies

a. Provide information and services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate

b. Create single points-of-contact for residents, clients, and other partners

c. Create a Web site that is easy to navigate and provides needed services

d. Consider fairness and opportunity for all in policy, budget and service decisions

Financial Stewardship

Goal: Exercise sound financial management and build King County's long-term fiscal strength.

Objective 1. Keep the county's cost of doing business down, including keeping growth in costs below the rate of inflation

Strategies

a. Partner with the county's workforce to improve productivity and identify ways to contain the growth of future costs

b. Work with cities to identify opportunities to provide services more efficiently, such as contracting

c. Transition the governance and fiscal responsibility for local services in urban unincorporated areas to cities

d. Pursue technologies that improve service while reducing the cost of delivery

Objective 2. Plan for the long-term sustainability of county services

Strategies

a. Manage the county's assets and capital investments in a way that maximizes their productivity and value

b. Develop and implement a long-term financial plan that reflects service levels desired by the public

c. Establish policies regarding the use and long-term health of financial reserves, including the county's rainy day fund

d. Advocate for a more diversified revenue base and implement financial policies that address variability in revenue growth

e. Partner with cities to leverage state and federal resources

f. Assess county taxes through fair and equitable application of tax law

g. Encourage entrepreneurship, grant-seeking, and leveraging private sector talent and resources

Objective 3. Provide the public with choices about which services King County delivers within existing resources and for which services they would like to provide additional funding

Strategies

a. Clearly define the services King County will provide, to whom, and at what level, focusing on quality, timeliness, and cost

b. Use public input, including voter approved levies when appropriate, to make decisions about which products, services, and projects are provided

Public Engagement

Goal: Promote robust public engagement that informs, involves, and empowers people and communities.

Objective 1. Expand opportunities to seek input, listen, and respond to residents

Strategies

a. Develop communication channels that will allow all residents ongoing opportunities to be heard and receive a timely and appropriate response

b. Increase and improve the use of new technology and social media tools for citizen involvement

c. Ensure that communication, outreach and engagement efforts reach all residents, particularly communities that have been historically under-represented

Objective 2. Empower people to play an active role in shaping their future

Strategies

a. Provide accurate, secure and accessible elections

b. Promote meaningful community participation in decisions that affect their community

Objective 3. Improve public awareness of what King County does

Strategies

a. Develop guidelines and standards for public engagement and education for use by all county agencies

b. Create a countywide plan to coordinate communication across different lines of business

c. Use public outreach to better communicate who we are and what we do

Quality Workforce

Goal: Develop and empower King County government's most valuable asset, our employees.

Objective 1. Attract and recruit a talented county workforce

Strategies

a. Promote King County as an employer of choice

b. Promote the value of customer service excellence in hiring and recruiting activities

c. Promote equity, social justice and transparency in hiring and recruiting activities

d. Reduce the time to fill positions

Objective 2. Develop and retain quality employees

Strategies

a. Provide for career growth opportunities

b. Promote the development of employees to ensure continuity of government services

c. Build leadership and professional skills within our workforce

d. Promote wellness and work/life balance initiatives, policies, and programs that contribute to an increase in healthy hours worked

e. Implement training and development programs to help achieve county goals

Objective 3. Utilize employees in an efficient, effective, and productive manner

Strategies

a. Seek employee collaboration on cost reduction, service improvement, and problem solving

b. Enable employee health and safety

c. Recognize employees for high-performance, good customer service, innovation, and strategic thinking

d. Promote the use of technology to maximize productivity and efficiency

e. Communicate decisions, important issues, goals, and expectations

f. Ensure effective partnerships with our workforce, including timely resolution of bargaining and related issues

g. Develop ongoing communication channels to solicit employee input and participation

Immediate Priorities

While the goals on the previous pages

are intended to have an immediate and lasting influence on King County budgeting and policy making, obviously the county cannot seriously tackle every strategy at once. Some strategies are more immediate than others. Their achievement in the first years of this plan will significantly improve King County's ability to tackle every other goal laid out in the strategic plan. The following immediate priorities are the blueprint for the first year of work implementing the Countywide Strategic Plan.

1. Set standards and expectations for the immediate improvement of customer service

Throughout the planning process we heard about the challenges in contacting and communicating with county government. As a result, King County will immediately identify a senior Executive lead for customer service tasked with reforming the way King County provides customer service. This new approach will include efforts like:

- Creating a single point of contact for customers and a customer service Web site
- Defining King County's principles and standards for customer service
- Identifying customer service measures and working with management and employees to collect and report on these measures.

2. Build lasting regional partnerships

The only way we are going to be able to overcome the external challenges facing King County is by working together. King County will need to reinvigorate its relationships with both governmental partners (such as cities, state and regional entities), and the business, labor and non-profit communities. This will include actions like:

- Meeting with cities regularly on regional issues like animal services and criminal justice system planning
- Meeting with rural area mayors and Unincorporated Area Councils to strengthen rural service delivery
- Working collaboratively to leverage resources at the state and regional levels
- Working with non-governmental partners to find innovative ways to meet regional needs.

3. Stabilize the long-term structural budget problem by clearly defining King County services levels and giving voters choices

Given the current economic situation and King County's ongoing fiscal constraints (such as limits on revenue growth), immediate actions will need to be taken to stabilize the budget and clearly articulate service levels and priorities. King County will need to implement reforms to bring down the cost of doing business and improve performance. Where service efficiencies are exhausted, policymakers and voters will be required to make tough choices – service reductions/eliminations or new revenues. Specific actions will include:

- Implementing the Accountable Business Transformation project to streamline internal operations
- Seeking flexibility and diversified revenue sources to support basic services
- Clearly identifying products and services to the public and involving them in making choices.

4. Build a culture of performance

Performance will be the basis on which this strategic plan, and King County's success, will be judged. Given the pervasive lack of trust in government, and more specifically, King County residents' lack of understanding about what King County does, the county needs to build a comprehensive, accountable performance management system. This will include:

- Developing ongoing dialogue between management and employees about performance and performance standards
- Integration of performance management into budgeting and budget decisions
- Working with County leadership to clearly identify high-level performance standards for King County on which elected officials will be accountable to the public.

5. Empower our workforce and work together as One King County

King County employees will be integral to achieving the goals defined in this plan, as will cooperation across departments and agencies. In order to more effectively leverage employee ideas and facilitate collaboration, King County will:

- Create new channels for employees to make suggestions about improving the services they deliver
- Frequently engage county elected officials on issues that touch multiple aspects of county government to ensure coordination and efficiency
- Coordinate communication across departments and agencies to more effectively speak to the public and partners as *One* King County.

Performance Measures

How do we know if the plan is making a difference?

Performance measurement is an important tool for accountability and management and has been included in various strategies of the plan. Because it is such an important tool, this plan also includes its own measurement framework to reflect the degree this plan has been successful at achieving its goals. This framework will also serve as the basis for King County's ongoing performance measurement and management efforts.

Objective: Keep people safe

Indicators

- Resident's perception of safety
- Crime rate

Strategy: Maintain safe county-owned infrastructure

Performance Measure

- Transit passenger perception of safety
- Number of reported assaults

The framework relies on measuring at two levels: **community indicators** and **performance measures**. Community indicators reflect the condition of the community or the environment. Indicators are influenced by many factors and reflect the combined efforts of multiple jurisdictions and organizations. King County government typically has little control over the status of indicators. The county is, however, one of many actors working to influence each indicator.

Performance measures are intended to help the public understand and evaluate the county's performance in achieving its goals. The degree of influence varies by measure; in some cases the measure represents a specific program result, in other cases a measure may be the result of multiple agencies' efforts. The county typically has more influence over its performance measures than community-level indicators.

For the strategic plan, we are using community indicators to inform us about how we are doing on achieving the plan's *objectives*. For example, for one objective, "Keep people safe in their homes and communities" would be measured by an overall residential perception of safety and community crime rates. Measures are used to measure the effectiveness of the plan's *strategies*. For example, one strategy to keeping people safe is to "Maintain safe county-owned infrastructure." To track how we are doing in achieving that strategy we would look at measures like transit passenger perception of safety.

Proposed indicators and measures are included in the appendix. We recognize that these indicators and measures are suggestive or illustrative and the process of improving the measures will continue to evolve over time. In some cases we do not currently have a measure that ties directly to a specific objective or strategy and we propose to fill these in for the next version of the plan.

How do we implement the plan?

A strategic plan is just that – a plan. Without effective implementation and follow-through, it will never be more than that. *Action* is assured by creating mechanisms for accountability. Performance measurement is just one aspect, albeit a very important one, of implementation. Other mechanisms will be needed to ensure the plan is used as intended—to inform policy, operational, and budget decisions.

These are several success factors that the county will focus on in year one of the plan. They include:

- Ensuring that the countywide strategic plan is a process (not a one time event), such that it receives regular review and is flexible with respect to changing conditions
- A commitment and clear accountability, particularly on the part of county leadership
- Strong linkages to the budget process and budget decision-making
- An acknowledgement of the need for changes on behalf of leadership, departments and agencies, and employees
- The creation of linkages between employees and the plan to ensure that it is executable and embodied in everything we do.

Achievement of these success factors will significantly increase the likelihood that the plan is put to its intended uses. Failure to achieve them will increase the likelihood that the plan ultimately just sits on a shelf. Consequently, developing specific steps to achieve each of the success factors above will be a critical focus in the months leading up to plan adoption.

King County

Alternative formats available.

Please call 206-263-9600 or TTY 711.

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