

Kern County Administrative Office



County Administrative Center

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County Administrative Officer

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Board of Supervisors
Kern County Administrative Center
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REPORT ON COUNTY GOALS PROPOSED FOR 2016

Fiscal Impact: None

This report is to provide an overview and seek direction on the 2016 County goals submitted by Supervisor Couch at the December 15, 2015 Board meeting. As stated in the memo, these goals are intended to “generate discussion and focus priorities” and many of these goals are currently in progress and have previously been discussed. The purpose of adopting Countywide goals is to closely examine existing approaches for providing services to Kern County residents. As the availability of resources become increasingly scarce and the County endeavors to sustain and improve service levels, new models of service delivery will be required to meet these challenges. Also, they are attainable in the near future and can hopefully be a springboard for additional goals and objectives that will enhance the lives of our County’s residents.

DISCUSSION AND GOALS

The goals listed in this report are statements of intended results that can be accomplished in the next year. Each goal identifies what the County intends to accomplish and the benefits of attaining the goal. Plans and actions based on a clear set of goals are more likely to succeed in meeting the community’s needs.

Goal: Continue to analyze departmental reorganizations.

This goal is a continuing effort to reduce redundancies and increase efficiencies. The County will continue to evaluate the consolidation of functionally-related departments. This goal began in phases during 2015, with the first phases involving ESPS, Waste Management and Roads combining to form the Public Works Department; Employers’ Training Resource and Board of Trade combining into a Division of Economic and Workforce Development; and Personnel and the Employee Relations/Health Benefits Division combining to form a comprehensive Human Resources Division. The next phases during 2016 may evaluate adding Parks and Recreation to General Services and other functionally-related departments.

Benefits: To reduce duplicative positions through attrition over time; to restructure in a manner that facilitates improved communication with the public and among employees working in similar environments.

Goal: Develop a Capital and Major Maintenance Master Plan for replacement and maintenance of existing facilities to include security enhancement at Kern County facilities.

The County is responsible for providing physical facilities that are a safe and secure environment and in compliance with State and federal regulatory requirements. County buildings are important to our communities and allow the County to provide services to the residents of Kern County. Also, with recent public buildings falling victim to terrorist attacks and other violent tragedies, the goal is to secure our facilities prior to a security breach. By evaluating our County facilities we can better decide the best ways to protect the patrons of the building.

A significant portion of Kern County's buildings are outdated and the maintenance of these structures is significant. Minor alterations and repairs are required to bring existing buildings, structures, facilities, and equipment into compliance with current building codes and applicable federal and State regulations. To better serve our County, our buildings must meet State and federal requirements to accommodate all patrons.

Benefits: A master plan will provide the County with the opportunity to inventory assets and assess the need for and the condition of these assets. This assessment should include the opportunity to evaluate issues, challenges and opportunities affecting the provision of capital assets in the future: community needs and priorities, the impact of deferred maintenance, funding issues, changes in technology, economic, demographic, or other factors that may affect demand, and legal and regulatory requirements.

Goal: *Develop a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy for those job classifications that have high turnover rates, such as Deputy Sheriff.*

Retaining employees is essential to optimizing operational productivity. Employee turnover generally causes disruption, expense, and recruitment costs. To determine the reason for an increase in turnover rates, all external and internal factors must be evaluated. Implementing a recruitment and retention plan could include (a) a flow diagram of the recruitment process (b) an evaluation of the selection process (c) review all training and onboarding procedures for new employees (d) analyze leadership and mentoring of new and current employees (e) evaluating classification and compensation structures, and (f) exit interviews. This plan will not only document current practices, but document the implementation of changes to make recruitment and retention a success.

Benefits: Improving the recruitment process and decreasing high turnover rates will help reduce costs, decrease disruptions in service, help eliminate repetitive training costs, increase public satisfaction, create more stability and boost employee morale.

Goal: *Identify areas for Information Technology efficiencies, enhancements and centralization including major system replacements in Human Resources/Payroll and FMS that will modernize the payroll and general ledger system and, where appropriate, look to centralize the County's IT functions into one department.*

The major Human Resources/Payroll systems are used by the Auditor-Controller and Human Resources Division to process payroll and manage many aspects of County staff. The payroll system requires frequent workarounds and manual fixes and offer limited flexibility to meet the requirements of changing laws and labor agreements. The system is coded in a programming language that is no longer commonly taught and is outdated.

Kern County General Services provided your Board with an Information Technology Assessment recommending the six highest priority initiatives for an Information Technology roadmap. Your Board took the first actions to meeting this goal by directing staff to begin the implementation process for meeting those six priorities.

Benefits: Replacing or upgrading these systems will work to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the County's personnel and payroll functions, eliminate redundancies and reduce duplication of efforts performed by both departments. Streamlining and simplifying our systems as a whole, rather than being distributed among various departments, allows for greater collaboration and sharing of information needed to provide seamless services to the public and internal employees.

Goal: *Develop a long term strategy to manage and contain employee health care costs while promoting a healthy workforce.*

As the cost of providing employee health care rises, it provides an additional strain on departmental budgets. Further, the indirect costs of poor health, such as an absence from work and reduced work productivity, can amplify the amount of direct medical costs. As employee health care costs continue to rise, the County could be subjected to the Affordable Care Act Cadillac tax in 2018. The Cadillac tax requires an employer to pay 40% of any amount above a \$10,200 value of medical benefits per employee or retiree. Under our current medical plan structure, the County is likely to incur a significant cost for providing such high-value benefits to its employees. This additional tax comes at a time when our current benefits are already increasing steadily over a year-to-year basis. To face these issues, the County must develop a comprehensive long term strategy for its group health plans and aggressively promote wellness programs.

Benefits: Creating a strategic plan, comprehensive wellness program, and looking into different medical benefits for employees provides the mutual benefit of improving the lives of individual employees and reducing healthcare costs borne by the taxpayer. Achieving this goal can also reduce the potential Affordable Care Act Cadillac tax beginning in 2018.

Goal: Target a significant community health issue such as diabetes for a major campaign.

Kern County is one of the unhealthiest counties in California. Of the 58 counties in California, Kern County ranks 58 in heart disease and 57 in diabetes, with more than 60% of the population considered obese. The goal of a health campaign is to warn Kern County residents about potential dangers to their health and encourage them to take practical steps towards a healthier lifestyle. Health campaigns provide practical advice on how to live a healthy lifestyle such as dietary advice, preventative measures, helplines and much more. A successful campaign will include a budget, plan of action, key message, visuals, community partnerships and a strong relationship with local media to get the word out. Reaching out to the community will also increase social connections and a greater sense of community. Lastly, Kern County employees can be a positive and encouraging example for the community through the promotion of employee wellness measures.

Benefits:

Successful health programs help people live healthier, longer and happier lives. A healthy community is a more desirable community in which to live. Preventative health measures can drastically reduce the high cost of treatment on the back end.

Goal: Develop a strategic plan towards becoming a no kill Animal Shelter.

Currently, thousands of animals are euthanized each year at Kern County Animal Shelters. This goal is to work towards a no kill Animal Shelter by preventing the euthanasia of all adoptable animals. This will require wide-ranging community involvement in managing the pet overpopulation, and the County would need to carry out significant outreach efforts to the various stakeholders. Programs such as the recently established crowdfunding platform, "Pets for Vets", could be used as a positive springboard for ramping up programs toward a "no kill" Shelter.

On December 15, 2015, Nick Cullen, your Director of Animal Services, provided a report on the components and challenges of becoming a "no kill" shelter. Your Board adopted the industry standard for the "no kill" program as a viable goal for the Kern County Animal Shelter.

Benefits: In addition to the potential cost savings, preventing the unnecessary euthanasia of adoptable pets and controlling our pet population through more humane means is an honorable virtue reflective of Kern County's residents.

Goal: Formalize an Audit Committee structure and develop a risk assessment and audit plan beginning in July of 2016.

The purpose of an Audit Committee is to provide independent oversight, assistance, and advice on audits that are the Board of Supervisor's responsibility. The committee would provide an independent forum to which audit matters that merit further study and analysis can be referred. All significant matters that the committee believes merit the Board of Supervisors' attention would be submitted to the Board with recommendations, if appropriate. The committee would provide a forum in which audit concerns and improvements are candidly discussed, analyzed, and prioritized to improve transparency and consistency of current and proposed audit activities. Improved audit activities would include implementation of a countywide risk assessment for purposes of selecting audits to be performed (audit plan). The audit plan would allocate available resources to meet the audit goals and priorities for the upcoming year.

On March 8, 2016, your Board received legal analysis of the audit function roles and responsibilities of the Auditor-Controller and the Board of Supervisors and approved an Audit Committee and initial membership.

Benefit: The committee is expected to greatly increase communication among the Board, CAO, auditors, auditees, and other interested parties. This improved collaboration will help determine Countywide priorities.

Goal: Develop a strategic plan for Roads and Fire revenue funds, which rely on shrinking tax revenues, and establish a threshold in discretionary growth to be set aside for one-time costs.

Consistent with the County's multi-year fiscal strategic plan, this goal will better situate the Roads and Fire departments in aligning resources with operational priorities and the needs of the County's residents. Developing a strategic fiscal plan for both Roads and Fire, that are subject to revenue uncertainties, will allow the departments to create specific, meaningful, relevant, and measurable goals to serve as a budget guide. These goals shall serve as a template for decision making and assist departments with significant revenue fluctuations. Further, promoting fiscal responsibility in the Roads and Fire funds will allow the General Fund to focus on achieving its own strategic fiscal plan and coping with its own fiscal challenges.

Benefits: Aligning resources with operational priorities and the needs of County's citizens.

Goal: Develop a strategic plan to transfer parks located in metropolitan areas to the cities.

For many years our Kern County Parks and Recreation Department has taken budget cuts and suffered the consequences of declining quality. Unfortunately, the Parks and Recreation Department is likely to continue having limited resources due to a decline in property taxes resulting from oil and gas assessments. General Fund departments have been asked to take reductions to help balance the budget. One proposed solution to help solve this problem is to transfer parks that are in metropolitan areas to the cities. Developing a strategic plan to transfer parks will help restore the stability of resources to our County parks through new business practices that emphasize community and will reduce the burden on Kern County's General Fund. The transferring of local parks to cities will potentially enhance park amenities and maximize the investment of taxpayers' dollars.

Benefits: Improve the facilities at County parks, increase attendance and decrease the financial burden of having County parks as islands within municipal jurisdictions.

Goal: Explore the creation of an Innovation Council, consisting of representatives from Business, Education, Government, Media, Faith-Based, Arts and Entertainment, and Nonprofit organizations to identify and recommend solutions to Countywide challenges.

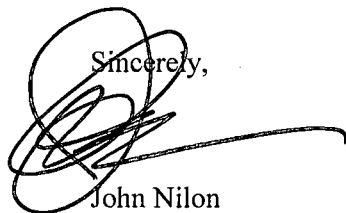
The concept of an Innovation Council is to provide a shared platform for strategic solutions to service challenges across Kern County. Different groups and organizations sharing the same goal of tackling community issues can be strategically advantageous. Increased participation from all sectors will increase community awareness and has more power to influence positive change because a larger and broader section of the community is represented.

Benefits: Greater synergy and access to ideas and resources. It can help avoid duplication by ensuring efforts and services have a unified goal and approach. Provides greater community awareness and involvement with all of the different sectors representing a broad cross-section of Kern's communities.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Your Board has encouraged new and enhanced ways of addressing operational challenges for Kern County. The goals outlined above represent concrete examples of achievable outcomes. Ideas such as technology, structural reorganization, community collaboration and partnerships, and advanced strategic planning incorporate key elements for adapting to change and inspiring successful outcomes. The County Administrative Office, in partnership with other County departments and allied organizations, is looking forward to incorporating the Board's priorities for 2016 County goals.

Therefore, IT IS RECOMMENDED that your Board receive and file the report, discuss the identified goals and provide direction.

Sincerely,


John Nilon
County Administrative Officer

cc: All Departments