



Legislation Text

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To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): County Administrator

Staff Name and Phone Number: Katherine DiPasqua, 707-565-3779

Vote Requirement: Informational Only

Supervisorial District(s): All

Title:

County of Sonoma Five-Year Strategic Plan

Recommended Action:

Receive and provide feedback on Draft Five-Year Strategic Plan.

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this item is to provide the Board of Supervisors the opportunity to review the updated Draft Strategic Plan, and provide additional feedback prior to its final approval, set for March 2, 2021. Since the Board reviewed the Strategic Plan goals and objectives on August 11, 2020, County staff launched an extensive employee and community engagement effort to gather input on the draft plan, discover if any additional goals or objectives should be added, and understand how County employees and the public would prioritize the objectives. After receiving input from over 1,700 people through online surveys, focus groups, open house sessions, community meetings, stakeholder presentations, letters and emails, the Steering Committee revised the goals and objectives to ensure that the updated draft Strategic Plan reflects the vision and priorities of our employees and community.

Discussion:

The County of Sonoma is in the process of developing a Five-Year Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will provide the context to inform policies and projects that are prioritized for the next five years. The Plan will guide how we align short and long-term objectives with operations and budgets, so our actions reflect a clear sense of purpose and demonstrate meaningful progress.

Since late 2019, County leaders and Board members have been engaged in developing the base framework for the Strategic Plan. The Board of Supervisors discussed the base framework during its Strategic Planning Retreat on January 28, 2020 where five Strategic Pillars were identified and discussed. Those five Pillars are: Healthy and Safe Communities, Organizational Excellence, Racial Equity and Social Justice, Climate Action and Resiliency, and Resilient Infrastructure. A Steering Committee, consisting of two departmental leaders for each Pillar, was then formed to assist the County Administrator's Office with the development of the plan.

Originally, staff anticipated the process to gather feedback from employees and the community and prepare the plan would take six months, with the Board approving the final Strategic Plan in August 2020. However, with the declaration of local emergencies for COVID-19 in March, Walbridge/Meyers Fire in September, and Glass Fire in October, the launch of employee and community engagement was pushed out to November

2020, with an updated target of March 2021 for final Strategic Plan approval.

In order to develop a long-term planning document that will guide how the County of Sonoma will prioritize policies and projects, County leadership first needed to revisit the County's mission statement, and identify the values and guiding principles that will be used to inform how the Strategic Plan's goals and objectives will be implemented.

Mission

A Mission is a formal summary of the aims and values of an organization. Sonoma County's stated mission is "*To enrich the quality of life in Sonoma County through superior public services.*"

Values

Values represent the core beliefs that an organization wishes to foster through its actions and in pursuit of its mission. They shape the County's culture and inform the priorities and strategies we choose. In late 2019, County Department Heads identified the values they most wanted to see reflected in the Strategic Plan. Later, the Board of Supervisors narrowed that list down to five core values, listed below.

1. Equity

Equity is an outcome whereby you cannot tell the difference in critical markers of health, well-being, and wealth by race or ethnicity, and a process whereby we explicitly value the voices and contributions of people of color, low income, and other underrepresented and underserved communities who identify solutions to achieve that outcome.

2. Excellence

Excellence is the commitment to superior public service by ensuring all processes and operations are necessary, clearly defined, and efficiently designed.

3. Accountability

Accountability is taking ownership of our actions and being fiscally responsible and results driven, so that our success is aligned with community outcomes.

4. Collaboration

Collaboration is ensuring that the right people are being included in the discussion, from City partners, community stakeholders, employees and the public, so that we can work together to support common values and a vision to achieve shared goals.

5. Innovation

Innovation in County operations is creating an environment for County staff to move projects forward, supporting new ideas and increased efficiency, and developing solutions that have the greatest public benefit.

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are the overarching philosophies that are applied to each of the Strategic Plan's five pillars.

Along with our values, these principles will influence how the County makes decisions, sets policies, allocates resources, implements strategies and measures results.

- Geographic Equity
Access to services should be equitably distributed across the County.
- Leveraging Funds
By using innovative funding strategies and leveraging grants, the County can advance its strategic priorities without impacting baseline service provision.
- Partnerships with Cities and Community Stakeholders
Collaboration with local jurisdictions and community stakeholders is essential in advancing countywide strategic priorities. By working together, we serve the community better.

Employee and Community Engagement

In order to have the final Strategic Plan reflect the priorities of County employees and community members, the CAO launched substantial engagement efforts in the midst of the pandemic. After seeking input from Department Heads, the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, our consultant, HR Matrix, the CAO communications staff, and Sonoma County's racial equity groups, Office of Equity, SoCo REAL and SoCo LERN, the CAO designed and launched an extensive, bi-lingual employee and community engagement campaign.

The main objectives for the engagement process were to gather input and reactions on the draft plan, discover additional goals or objectives for consideration, and understand the relative priority of the draft objectives in the eyes of County employees and community members.

Employee Engagement

In order for the Strategic Plan implementation to be successful, it is critical to get buy-in from County employees. Therefore, it was important to get employee input on the draft materials before they were finalized. The team developed several ways for employees to engage with the process, many of which had never been done for County employees before. The first was an Online Survey that allowed employees to provide feedback on the goals and objectives for all five pillars, contribute ideas, and ask questions. We received a total of 723 survey responses.

We also hosted twelve virtual Employee Focus Groups on the Organizational Excellence, Healthy and Safe Communities, Climate Action and Resiliency, and Resilient Infrastructure Pillars. Focus Group participants were selected by Department Heads in order to get a broad cross-section of job classes and program areas. In total, 167 employees participated. Similarly, the Office of Equity convened small group discussions on the Racial Equity and Social Justice Pillar with employees who either work on racial equity and social justice efforts within their departments or had received prior racial equity and social justice training.

Finally, we hosted virtual Drop-In Open House sessions on each of the five pillars that were open to all County employees. The Open House sessions were three and a half hour blocks of time, with a facilitator and Strategic Plan resources available so that employees could log on for up to 30 minutes to provide feedback, listen to others, and ask questions in an interactive environment. The format was flexible in order to encourage broad participation, with 154 employees participating in one or more of the sessions.

Community Engagement

Similar to employee engagement, there were several ways that community members could provide input on the draft Strategic Plan. The first was a Community Online Survey, which was available in both English and Spanish. Community members were able to review each Pillar's goals, rank their level of support, and identify which are the most important for the County to pursue. They also had the opportunity to ask questions and offer additional goals for consideration. We received a total of 291 survey responses.

We also hosted ten virtual Community Sessions on each of the five pillars, one in English and one in Spanish. Community members had the option of watching on Zoom, Facebook Live, or calling in and submitting questions via email. County staff and Strategic Plan Steering Committee members were available in each session to track incoming questions and support the facilitator in responding to questions. For those participating on Zoom, we also used polling technology to determine how community members would prioritize pillar objectives. For all ten Community Sessions, we had a total of 157 participants in the Zoom webinars and 206 participants watching and commenting on Facebook Live.

In addition, we made a significant effort to engage community stakeholder groups by offering to host Focus Groups on their choice of a high-level discussion on all five pillars, or a more in-depth discussion on two pillars of their choosing. Staff worked with the Board of Supervisors to develop a list of organizations to contact, and then organized sixteen Community Stakeholder presentations for the following affinity groups: cities, senior service organizations, agriculture, business and tourism, environmental and natural resource, education, labor and workforce, municipal advisory and citizen advisory committees, and community organizations active in a disaster.

We also developed a "Session-in-a-Box" for Community Stakeholder groups that wished to host their own Focus Groups for their members and collect feedback. These packages included the Strategic Plan materials, talking points, and exercises that would allow community partners to provide input on the Strategic Plan materials. And finally, we encouraged community members to submit any additional feedback via email to StrategicPlanning@sonoma-county.org <<mailto:StrategicPlanning@sonoma-county.org>>.

Findings from Engagement Process

All employee and community feedback received has been collected, analyzed, and shared with the Steering Committee to assist them in revising the pillar goals and objectives. The collection of input received, including online survey responses, employee and community stakeholder focus groups, community sessions, Facebook comments, letters, and emails, has been catalogued and can be viewed in **Attachment 2**.

In terms of demographics, the vast majority of employee and community online survey respondents currently live in Santa Rosa, distantly followed by Windsor, Petaluma, and Sebastopol. Combined, 68% identified as White, 13% Hispanic, 4% Multi-Racial, 3% Asian, and 2% African American. For the most part, employees and community members were very supportive of the plan materials and appreciated the opportunity to refine the goals and objectives.

Some common themes arose during both the employee and community engagement process. Many noted that the language used in many goals and objectives contained too much jargon and needed to be simplified. Similarly, others commented that the goals and objectives were vague and didn't address how the objectives

would be carried out or who would be accountable for achieving the intended outcomes. In response, the Steering Committee revised the language to remove jargon, added more explanations about County terminology, and made an effort to make the objectives more measurable. Additionally, each objective has an identified lead, co-lead, or participant department, as appropriate. The identified department leads and participants will be responsible for developing the implementation plan needed to achieve each objective. Implementation plans will be developed over the course of the next six to nine months, following the final approval of the plan. The final plan, which will be coming to the Board on March 2, 2021 for approval, will also name a County staff person as an owner for each objective to further increase accountability and promote action.

Another common theme in the feedback was an interest in seeing more focus on disaster preparedness, wildfire, and earthquake prevention and protection. In 2019, when the original visioning for the Five-Year Strategic Plan took place, disaster preparedness was discussed as a potential Pillar. At that time, it was determined that the work would be accomplished without making it a primary element of the new Strategic Plan. However, with multiple fires occurring in Fall 2020, it was at the forefront of employee and community members minds during the engagement sessions, and it clearly needed to be more directly reflected in the County's Strategic Plan. The Organizational Excellence, Resilient Infrastructure, Climate Action and Resiliency Pillars have been updated to include specific objectives that address disaster service workers, vegetation management, and protection of County infrastructure from all hazards, including flood, wildfire and earthquake.

Given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, two more themes arose from our engagement process, particularly among community members - economic recovery and food resiliency. Sonoma County's economy has not been immune to the devastating impacts of the pandemic. As a result of COVID-19 job losses, Sonoma County's unemployment rate peaked at 14.5% in April 2020 and CalFresh (food stamps) application rates increased by 21.45%. There will also be lingering impacts from COVID-19 on the County's economy as recession leads to recovery. Experts predict that Sonoma County's economy will not recover to 2019 year-end jobs levels before 2023, and there is likely to be a net loss of employers in Sonoma County by 2023. In response, the Board of Supervisors asked the Sonoma County Economic Development Board (EDB) and the Sonoma County Office of Recovery and Resiliency (ORR) to collaborate to develop an Economic Recovery Action Plan, using broad community input. The Economic Recovery Plan was published in November 2020 and addresses three main recovery areas: Business Recovery, Workforce Recovery, and Community Recovery.

The Five-Year Strategic Plan is a long-term planning document and is not intended to incorporate short-term recovery efforts. As a result, the revisions to the plan's goals and objectives did not focus on economic recovery efforts. Similarly, food resilience was not incorporated into the updated plan because it also falls under the short-term recovery efforts category. However, as described below, there are many intersections between the Strategic Plan and the Economic Recovery Action Plan's more long-range goals.

Alignment with Other County Initiatives

There are several intersections between the Strategic Plan goals and objectives and other County initiatives. For instance, many of the thirteen key strategies identified in the Economic Recovery Action Plan are reflected in the Strategic Plan, including retaining and attracting Sonoma County's workforce, ensuring safety net services are available to the County's most vulnerable populations, expanding broadband access infrastructure, and addressing climate and energy impacts. Similarly, the many goals identified in the Recovery

and Resiliency Framework are aligned with the Strategic Plan, including creation of housing for all income levels and exploring County-owned properties for housing development, enhanced safety net capacity and collaboration, and maintaining healthy and productive natural resources in the County. These areas of intersection are identified in the Strategic Plan.

In addition to the Strategic Plan, staff are currently developing two other long-range planning documents, the County General Plan and Sonoma Water Climate Adaptation Plan. The Steering Committee has coordinated with both Permit Sonoma and Sonoma Water to ensure that the upcoming plans are aligned with Strategic Plan goals and objectives.

Revised Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

The CAO and Strategic Plan Steering Committee have worked together to incorporate the immense amount of feedback received from County employees and members of the public to update the Plan's strategic priorities. The Strategic Plan is comprised of five Pillars, which identify the most important strategic priorities for the County over the next five years. Each Pillar is supported by multiple goals, the outcomes we want to achieve, and within each goal, there are several objectives identifying the milestones or measures of progress toward that goal.

Please see the Draft Strategic Plan, **Attachment 1**, for the full list of updated pillar goals and objectives for Board consideration. For a side-by-side comparison of the goals discussed with the Board in January 2020, August 2020, and those presented today, please refer to **Attachment 3**. We would also like to thank the Strategic Planning team for all their contributions to this yearlong effort, and have included a list of participants in **Attachment 4**.

Healthy and Safe Communities Pillar

Provide equitable access to quality and equitable housing, health, and human services for all.

Pages 5-8 of Draft Strategic Plan

Organizational Excellence Pillar

Be an innovative, effective, engaged, and transparent organization focused on quality programs and services.

Pages 9-11 of Draft Strategic Plan

Racial Equity and Social Justice Pillar

Achieve racial equity in County service provision and ensure a workforce reflective of the community we serve.

Pages 12-14 of Draft Strategic Plan

Climate Action and Resiliency Pillar

Make Sonoma County carbon neutral by 2030.

Pages 15-17 of Draft Strategic Plan

Resilient Infrastructure Pillar

Enhance community resilience to fire and other hazards by investing in County facilities and infrastructure, including roads, buildings and property, communications, and flood protection.

Pages 18-20 of Draft Strategic Plan

Implementation Approach

Implementation Plans

Once the Strategic Plan is approved, County staff who are assigned roles will work on developing implementation plans for each objective. The goal is to achieve each by the end of 2026. However, the timeline for implementation will vary based on many factors, including the complexity of the objective, partner and community input, workforce capacity and availability, budget availability, and effective coordination with County partners. Implementation plans will be reviewed regularly to assess their success in meeting the milestones set out in the objectives, and will be embedded within Department work plans and budgets, as appropriate.

Data Tracking and Reporting

County Administrator staff are working with the Information Systems Department (ISD) to develop and launch an Online Dashboard on the County’s Strategic Plan website that will track progress on each of the plan’s goals and objectives. The type of data reported will be dependent on the objective, and could include expenditures, progress towards completion, or number of clients served, projects completed, trainings provided, etc. Until the Strategic Plan is incorporated into the annual County budget process in Fiscal Year 2022-23, County Administrator staff will be launching a pilot program to start tracking Fiscal Year 2021-22 expenditures related to one objective for each of the five pillars to post on the Online Dashboard. Data on the Dashboard will be updated regularly, and status updates will be provided to the Board of Supervisors for review in regular meetings.

Next Steps

In January and early February, staff will be making presentations to the Santa Rosa, Sonoma, Cotati, Cloverdale, Petaluma, and Rohnert Park City Councils to gather additional input on the revised goals and objectives for the Board’s consideration. The input from the cities will be brought forward to the Board at the March 2, 2021 meeting. Staff will also be working with ISD to update the Strategic Plan website (www.sonomacounty.ca.gov/Strategic-Plan/ <<http://www.sonomacounty.ca.gov/Strategic-Plan/>>) to incorporate a dashboard that will allow employees and the public to track the County’s progress on each of the goals and objectives. After today’s discussion with the Board, a revised draft of the Strategic Plan will be posted on the Strategic Plan website, in both English and Spanish, so that the public will be able to review and provide additional feedback. We will then return to the Board on March 2, 2021 to approve the Final Strategic Plan.

Prior Board Actions:

- January 28, 2020 - Strategic Planning Board Retreat
- August 11, 2020 - Sonoma County Five-Year Strategic Planning Update

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 20-21 Adopted	FY21-22 Projected	FY 22-23 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			

Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources			

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The Board’s approval of the Strategic Plan does not authorize appropriations or represent project approval of the goals and objectives in the plan. County departments will be expected to align their resources with the Strategic Plan’s goals and objectives, as appropriate. Given the timing of the Strategic Plan adoption, there is no identified funding in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Budget for the goals and objectives in the Strategic Plan. The Board will need to prioritize the goals and objectives each year through the County’s annual budget process.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

Attachments:

- 1 - Draft Five-Year Strategic Plan 2021-26
- 2 - Employee and Community Feedback
- 3 - Comparison of Goals
- 4 - County Strategic Plan Team
- 5 - Presentation

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board: