

Strategic Governance

Planning and Performance Management

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Riley Center for Livable Communities

The Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities is an interdisciplinary initiative of the College of Charleston whose mission is to leverage the intellectual resources of the College to support the economic, social and cultural vibrancy of the Lowcountry and other communities throughout South Carolina.



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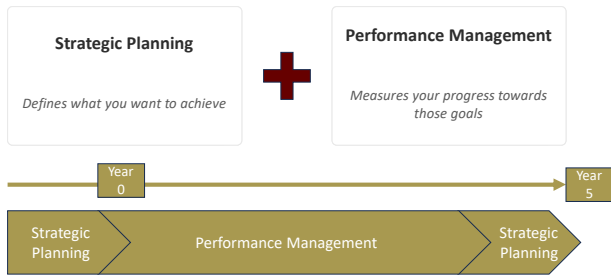
Agenda

1. Strategic Governance
2. Strategic Planning
3. Performance Management

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What is Strategic Governance?



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Why Invest Valuable Time in Strategic Governance?

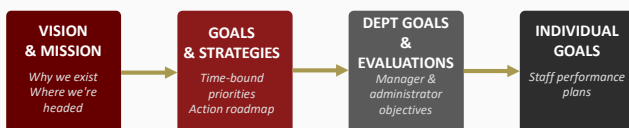
"A goal without a plan is just a wish." – Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

"Strategy without execution is just hallucination." – Thomas Edison

"What gets measured gets managed." – Peter Drucker
but "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts" – William Bruce Cameron

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Theory of Alignment



Key Takeaway: When alignment breaks down at any level, the strategic plan loses traction. Elected officials set the vision → administrators translate it into action → staff deliver results.

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Who Does What in Strategic Governance?

ELECTED OFFICIALS

- Set the vision and values
- Establish strategic priorities on behalf of constituents
- Approve the strategic plan
- Hold leadership accountable for results
- Communicate progress to the public
- Champion the plan publicly

COUNTY LEADERS & STAFF

- Facilitate the planning process
- Translate vision into goals and strategies
- Develop performance measures and reporting systems
- Align department budgets and work plans
- Report progress to elected officials regularly
- Implement and adapt

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Strategic Planning

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Let's Start with a Poll

1. Does your county have a current strategic plan?

2. If yes, were you involved in the creation of the strategic plan?

3. If yes, could you name at least 2 or more of the goals articulated in it if asked by a constituent?



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What is Strategic Planning?

The Purpose

Strategic planning is about **setting deliberate priorities** for the future, not documenting everything your government already does.

"The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do." – Michael Porter

Why Do It?

- Provides direction when resources are constrained
- Aligns elected officials, staff, and community around shared goals
- Creates accountability — measurable targets, not vague intentions
- Communicates progress to residents and stakeholders

"There is always a step small enough from where we are to get us to where we want to be. If we take that small step, there's always another we can take, and eventually a goal thought to be too far to reach becomes achievable." – Ellen Langer

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Different Plans — Different Purposes

STRATEGIC PLAN

Key Question: What do we want to see different in our community in the future?

- Focused on your highest priorities for change
- A focused agenda for change, NOT an inventory of everything the county is doing

vs.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Key Question: Are we taking care of our key responsibilities as a local government as they pertain to planning?

- Focused on planning considerations
- Typically does NOT include areas unrelated to planning and land use (i.e., public safety, youth programming) and internal operations

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Components of a Strategic Plan

VISION

MISSION

VALUES

GOALS

STRATEGIES

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Before You Start: Taking Stock

Before you start planning, it is critical to accurately and precisely characterize the **current state in your community**.

This could include:

- Reviewing available data on trends in your community (e.g., population trends, employment trends, etc.)
- Seeking perspectives from community members through structured events or public surveys
- Gathering input from Council members and staff

Goal: Create consensus around the most pressing issues facing the community.

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Before You Start: Taking Stock

Individual Activity (Part I)

- What data on trends might you want to look at in identifying the ~5 most pressing issues in your county?
- Who might you want to get input from?

Consider:

 - What perspectives are needed to identify the most pressing problems? Who can speak for them?
 - Who are the people, interest groups, or organizations who are necessary to implement solutions, can block action, and control resources?

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Before You Start: Taking Stock

Individual Activity (Part II)

- What are your organization's strengths and areas for growth?

Consider:

 - People (Human resources) and Culture
 - Systems, Processes, and Technology
 - Financial Resources
 - Interactions with Community and Partners (incl. local, state, federal)

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Component 1: Vision

A vision statement describes the ideal future state of your community, what success looks like in 10–20 years. It is aspirational, community-centered, and memorable.

Individual Activity

1. If you left the County today and did not return until this day in 2036, what would you like to see in the County? Feel free to answer this question as specifically or broadly as you wish.
2. How could you state this in 1 sentence? Ideally, this would be something concise that you could easily remember.

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Component 1: Vision

Examples

- **Bamberg County** will be a community where citizens can feel safe, raise their families, obtain quality education and employment, and thrive in a community with an exceptional quality of life.
- The government of **Dorchester County**, in partnership with its citizens and businesses, will play a leadership role in achieving a balance between growth, the environment, and preservation of the unique cultural and natural characteristics of Dorchester County.
- A thriving, vibrant, diverse community with abundant opportunities for unmatched quality of life that blends tradition and innovation. (**Greenville County**).

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Component 1: Vision

Next Steps:

- To what extent does your county's current vision statement reflect the vision you set out in your brainstorm?
- How could you work with your Council/Administrator to update the vision?

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Component 2: Mission

A mission statement defines your county's core purpose such as who you serve, what you do, and why. It answers the question: Why does this organization exist?

Individual Activity

1. What would happen in the community if the county government ceased to exist? What would not get done?
2. How could you state this in 1-2 sentences?

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Component 2: Mission

Examples

- To promote and protect the quality of life for everyone in **Charleston County** by providing services of value to the community while preserving the unique natural, cultural, and historical identity of the Lowcountry.
- **Calhoun County** Government is steadfast in its commitment to advancing the quality of life, health, and safety of all residents and visitors through the provision of essential public services and the promotion of sustainable development.
- We are committed to building a bright future for **Horry County** by delivering public services with excellence, protecting what makes our community special, and creating opportunities through progress and partnerships.

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Component 2: Mission

Next Steps:

- To what extent does your county's current mission statement reflect what you set out in your brainstorm?
- How could you work with your Council/Administrator to update the mission?

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Component 3: Values

Values are the principles that guide HOW your organization operates, the non-negotiable behaviors and commitments that define your culture.

Examples

Integrity
Honest, transparent operations

Equity
Fair access to services for all

Innovation
Continuous improvement

Accountability
Owning results & outcomes

Service
Responsive to resident needs

Collaboration
Partnership-driven

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Component 3: Values

Examples

Integrity	Equity	Innovation	Accountability
Service	Collaboration	Transparency	Responsiveness
Respect	Excellence	Data-Driven	Empowerment
Efficiency	Quality	Resilience	Inclusion
Accessible	Sustainability	Forward-thinking	Compassion

Individual Activity

- Which 4-5 of these values (or others) are most important to you to see in your local government?
- Pick at least one: What would it look like for the county to exhibit that value?

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Component 3: Values

Which 4-5 values did you identify as most important to you to see in your local government?



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Component 4: Goals

Goals define WHAT you want to achieve. Strategies define HOW. Both must be time-bound, tied to a specific planning horizon (typically 3–5 years).

Example: Dorchester County Strategic Plan, 2025-2030

GOAL: Develop and maintain resilient, efficient, and environmentally responsible infrastructure to support current and future community needs.

STRATEGY 1: Advance the Transportation Sales Tax Program for improved roads and consider alternative transportation (bike pedestrian), and public transit improvement

STRATEGY 2: Expand broadband and GIS capabilities for smarter infrastructure management

STRATEGY 3: Promote conservation through greenbelt programs, land acquisitions, and environmental health assessments

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Different Types of Goals

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED GOALS

Key Question: What tangible outcomes do we want to see in the county that the community will value?

Examples of Themes:

- Improve roads
- Increase local employment opportunities
- Reduce crime

GOVERNANCE GOALS

Key Question: How are we ensuring the county has the resources, processes, and people in place to be able to pursue our community-focused goals?

Examples of Themes:

- Increase number of qualified job applicants
- Ensure the county has meaningful reserves at the end of each fiscal year
- Increase quality and quantity of community engagement events.

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Component 4: Goals

Tips: Goals should be:

- Actionable and specific
- Realistic for the timeframe, but ambitious
- Productive towards shared vision

Example: Horry County Strategic Plan, 2025-2030

1. Strengthen public trust by communicating clearly, showcasing County successes, and meeting residents where they are.
2. Attract, develop and retain talented employees who feel engaged, valued and empowered to serve public, while building a culture of transparency, communication and accountability.
3. Manage rapid growth to preserve Horry County's unique character, ensure equitable access to services and enhance residents' well-being.
4. Sustain essential services and strategic investments through prudent budgeting, diversified revenues and transparent stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

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Component 4: Goals

Tips: Goals should be:

- Actionable and specific
- Realistic for the timeframe, but ambitious
- Productive towards shared vision

Individual Activity

1. What are 2-3 community-focused goals that you would like to see your county pursue?
2. What are 2-3 governance goals that you would like to see your county pursue?

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Component 4: Goals

1. What are some of the themes of the goals that you brainstormed?



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Component 4: Goals

Consolidation and Prioritization of Goals

Guiding Questions:

- What is the full set of priorities that county leaders would want to see accomplished?
- Of everything on our list, what can't wait another year, and what could?
- Where do priorities already overlap, even if they are framed differently?
- If you can only fully deliver on a few of these, which would you stand behind as proof you did what you said you'd do?
- What's the version of this list each leader could support, not necessarily the ideal, but the workable version?

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Who Does What in Strategic Planning?

ELECTED OFFICIALS

- Set the vision and values
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COUNTY LEADERS & STAFF

- Facilitate the planning process
- Translate vision into goals and strategies

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Performance Measurement

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What is Performance Measurement?

"A well-defined performance measurement system provides data to support decision making, justify budget requests, improve overall performance, communicate progress, and provide accountability." — ICMA

Performance measurement is the process of evaluating whether the county is making progress towards its goals and ensuring everyone in the county is working in the same direction.

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What is Performance Measurement?

Goal: Enhance the quality and accessibility of housing for all new and current residents.

Strategy: Implement a low interest loan program for first-time homeowners.

Measure: % increase in the number of housing units purchased by first-time homeowners

Strategy: To create a cross-functional team with members from law enforcement, fire, public works, codes and parks and recreation departments to address housing code violations

Measure: % reduction in the number of substandard housing code violations

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What is Performance Measurement?

Goal: Enhance the quality and accessibility of housing for all new and current residents.

Strategy: Implement a low interest loan program for first-time homeowners.

Measure: % increase in the number of housing units purchased by first-time homeowners

Target: To increase the number of housing units purchased by first-time homeowners by 25%

Strategy: To create a cross-functional team with members from law enforcement, fire, public works, codes and parks and recreation departments to address housing code violations

Measure: % reduction in the number of substandard housing code violations

Target: To reduce the number of substandard housing code violations by 40%

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Identifying Performance Indicators

Potential Sources

- Government Records
- Trained Observers
- Citizen / Staff Surveys

Considerations

- Measures need to be valid and reliable
- Measurement should not cause an undue burden
- Simple is often better than complex

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Types of Performance Indicators

How much work is there, and how is it being done?

- Demand
- Input
- Output

How well is the organization performing and supporting the community?

- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Outcomes

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Types of Performance Indicators

How much work is there, and how is it being done?

Demand

Community need or requests for service

Example: # of pothole complaints received

Input

Resources used to deliver services

Example: \$ budget allocated, FTEs assigned

Output

Volume of work produced

Example: # of potholes repaired per month

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Types of Performance Indicators

How well is the organization performing and supporting the community?

Efficiency

Cost or time per unit of output

Example: Cost per pothole repaired

Effectiveness

Quality and responsiveness of service

Example: % of potholes repaired within 48 hours

Outcomes

Long-term impact on community well-being

Example: % of residents rating roads as good/excellent

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Performance Measure Type Examples

What type of measures are each of the following?

1. Number of customer service requests received
2. % of requests responded to within 24 hours
3. % annual reduction in accidents
4. Number of staff hours dedicated to community engagement events
5. % of residents who report they can easily access county services
6. Number of animal spay-neuter surgeries
7. Cost per solid waste load

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Types of Performance Indicators

How much work is there, and how is it being done?

- Demand
- Input
- Output

How well is the organization performing and supporting the community?

- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Outcomes

Individual Activity

1. What data does your county currently report? Is it mostly output-focused or outcome-focused?
2. Think of one of the goals you identified earlier: What data would you like to see to know if you are on track to meet that goal?

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Models for Ongoing Monitoring

Internal Monitoring

How staff tracks progress

- Quarterly department-level reporting
- Dashboard for administrators
- Annual performance review process
- Budget-to-strategy alignment check

Detailed, Tactical

External Monitoring

How community sees progress

- Annual report to residents
- Public-facing performance dashboard
- Community surveys (resident satisfaction)
- Presentations at public meetings

Simple, Storytelling

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Examples of Monitoring

Examples

- [Charleston County](#)
- [Bamberg County](#)

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Monitoring

Key Questions

- If an engaged member of the community came to you tomorrow and asked if you were making progress towards the county's goals, what information would you like to have to answer the question?
 - As of today, how quickly could you get that information to the community member?
- If a community member could remember three successes of your county, what would those be?

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Monitoring

Individual Activity

- If a community member could remember three successes of your county, what would those be?
- What data would you want to include to demonstrate those successes?

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Who Does What in Performance Measurement?

ELECTED OFFICIALS

- Focus on: *Are we on track to meet our strategic goals? How do we need to adjust if/when we are off-course?*
- Hold leadership accountable for results (e.g., quarterly briefings, annual review)
- Communicate progress to the public

COUNTY LEADERS & STAFF

- Focus on: *What is driving results? How can we make tactical corrections or reallocate resources to be more effective?*
- Develop performance measures and reporting systems (e.g., monthly, ongoing tracking)
- Align department budgets and work plans
- Report progress to elected officials regularly

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Activity

Putting It All Together

- 1 **Think about your county** Choose a real issue your county faces (e.g., workforce housing, road infrastructure, economic development).
- 2 **Draft a goal statement** Make it outcome-oriented and time-bound. What would success look like in 3–5 years?
- 3 **Choose your indicators** What will you measure? Include at least one outcome indicator.

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Key Takeaways

- 01 Strategic planning is about setting priorities for change, not documenting everything you do.
- 02 Alignment matters at every level: vision → goals → departments → individual performance.
- 03 Elected officials set the direction. Staff translate it into action. Both roles are essential, but distinct.
- 04 Measure what matters: inputs and outputs matter, but effectiveness and outcomes reveal whether you're serving your community.

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Next Steps

For Your County

- Assess: Do you have a strategic plan that is current (within ~5 years)? If so, does it include a mission, vision, goals, and strategies that continue to feel current and relevant?
- Assess: How are you measuring the success of your county? Are you tracking outcomes, not just outputs? How are you telling the story to your community?

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Thank You

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