

GUILFORD COUNTY'S

The STRATEGIC ALLIANCE: BUILDING TOMORROW, TODAY

PROJECT OVERVIEW



The proposal to develop the first comprehensive strategic plan for Guilford County government was endorsed by the Board of Commissioners at its January 2007 annual retreat. Following the retreat, the county manager appointed a study committee consisting of 13 department heads and staff. The study committee, chaired by Sharisse Fuller, Human Resources Director, represents a cross-section of county functions including human service, community service, public safety and internal service departments. The committee researched and reviewed strategic planning efforts by other jurisdictions across the state and nationally. The committee proposed a process that was endorsed by the Board. The proposal outlined a project unique to Guilford County that incorporates proven best practices in an effort to determine how to best serve our community. The process relies on:

- ✚ Input from the people we serve;
- ✚ The creative talents and energy of county staff; and,
- ✚ The collective vision of all involved in the process.

The outcome of this effort is to ensure that county government is fiscally responsible while meeting the needs of our community.

The project will take between 14 to 16 months to fully develop and implement. The committee learned that a process of this nature cannot be rushed and that it is ongoing and ever evolving. The key phases of the process are:

Assessment

Goal Setting

Plan Development; and

Managing for Results

Each of the phases contains elements that build upon each other throughout the development of the plan and its implementation. **Each of these phases contains elements that are vital to the plan's success.**

The **Assessment Phase** requires maximum community involvement; the proposal includes identification of key stakeholders for all county services, a community survey targeted at the general public and stakeholders and community forums within commissioner districts. The survey is designed to identify gaps that exist in our service delivery, identify priorities for county government to address and evaluate our current performance of serving the needs of our community. The survey will be available through the county's website and in paper form. Every effort will be made to widely distribute the survey throughout the community.

The input and opinions expressed at the forums will be used to formulate the vision for the county. **While staff may know county government better than anyone, no one knows the needs of our community better than the citizens and the elected officials who represent them.**

Following the Assessment Phase, **Goal Setting** will be managed by county staff and the Board of Commissioners to establish a vision for the county, a mission statement to implement the vision and goals to support the mission by the end of 2007.

During the **Plan Development** Phase, each department will be responsible for developing objectives, strategies and action items designed to support and ultimately reach the goals set by the county. Many departments have already gone through this process, so the effort will not be duplicated. Since work has already been done in this area, those existing plans will be compiled and adjusted to meet the established goals. The completion of these phases will result in the County's 1st Comprehensive Strategic Plan. **To keep the plan off the shelf, it will be implemented as a business plan that will establish funding strategies that move the county forward, hold departments accountable and measure Guilford County's success.**

The last phase of the process will set the county on a course to integrate the plan with the budget by January 2009. **Managing for Results** will ensure fiscal responsibility and hold departments responsible for their performance. During this phase the county will:

- ✚ Set Departmental Performance Measures and Establish Benchmarks;
- ✚ Compare Performance Measures to other Communities; and
- ✚ Link the Strategic Plan and Department Performance to the Budget Process.

Finally, the strategic planning process must be continuous, subject to evaluation and evolve as the county prospers. To help ensure this, the process requires that the county annually report its successes to the community and that we receive feedback from the community on their perception of our success. To accomplish this, the county plans to:

- ✚ Produce an annual report for the community detailing our successes as they relate to the county's goals; and
- ✚ Perform a community assessment through a communitywide survey every two years.

We are proud of the work that we do for our citizens and want to be an integral component in making Guilford County the best place in the country to live, do business, work, educate and play.