



2003

Strategic Plan

Update

Mesa County
Colorado

June, 2003

PLANNING PARTICIPANTS

Mesa County Commissioners

James R. Baughman, District 1 Commissioner
Tilman M. Bishop, District 2 Commissioner
Doralyn B. Genova, District 3 Commissioner

Mesa County Elected Officials

Stan Hilkey, Sheriff
Janice Ward, Clerk and Recorder
Lee Stiles, Surveyor
Frank Daniels, District Attorney

Dr. Rob Kurtzman, Coroner
Monika Todd, Treasurer
Curtis Belcher, Assessor

Mesa County Constitutional Officers, Department Heads, and Administrative Staff

Dr. Mick Aduddell, Health Department Director
Lisa Armour, Lead Animal Control Officer
Marcia Arnhold, Finance Director
Pete Baier, Public Works Director
Dennis Berry, Criminal Justice Services Director
Virginia Butler, Personnel Analyst
Bob Carman, Road and Bridge Supervisor
Rick Corsi, GIS Coordinator
Linda Dannenberger, Land Use and Development
Lyle Dechant, County Attorney
Steve DeFeyer, Environmental Health Director
Susan Diaz, Department of Human Services
Bob Edmiston, Landfill Manager
Amy Storm-Farley, Chief Deputy Clerk
Steve Farlow, Jail Administrator
Keith Fife, Mesa County Long Range Planner
Tom Fisher, RTPO Director
Nancie Flenard, Personnel Director
Scott Forsgren, Fleet Manager
Bill Gardner, Undersheriff
Brent Goff, Chief Appraiser

Sue Gormley, Facilities and Parks Director
Bob Jasper, County Administrator
Martha Kent, Assistant District Attorney
Sue Kiser, Health Department Special Projects Director
Susan Kraich, Budget Analyst
Kurt Larsen, Planning Director
Bob Lee, Building Inspection Manager
Lisa Martin, Personnel Analyst
Stacey Mascarenas, Property Agent
Mike Meininger, Engineer
Penny McCarty, Animal Control Director
Gary Moretti, Criminal Justice Services
Tom Papin, Human Services Director
Kimberly Parker, Emergency Manager
Jon Peacock, Assistant County Administrator
Mark Reitz, Purchasing and Risk Manager
Valerie Robison, Assistant County Attorney
Tim Ryan, IMD Director
Gretchen Sigafoos, Health Department Nursing Director
Curtis Swift, Cooperative Extension
Sue Tuffin, Mesa County Workforce Center Director
Carl White, Traffic Engineer

Facilitated by: **Wade-Trim/Associates, Inc.** and **Project Innovations, Inc.**

Cover photo courtesy of Dr. Rob Kurtzman, Mesa County Coroner

The tempo of change in our society is unprecedented. Public officials must treat the future as an opportunity, not a threat. Those who refuse to do so are doomed to react to future events as if they are our collective destiny. Proper planning will help public officials and local government exploit the future - by limiting external threats, taking advantage of available opportunities, and being able to respond to community issues and problems in a responsible and positive manner.

-Roger L. Kemp, Editor, Strategic Planning in Local Government: A Casebook, American Planning Association, Planners Press, 1992, pg. 5



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Purpose of Strategic Planning

The Mesa County Strategic Plan is used by Mesa County staff, Mesa County Department Heads, and the Mesa County Board of County Commissioners to provide direction for the County's leadership role in our community, and as a guide for allocation of limited resources for service delivery. By planning for the future, Mesa County government is better prepared to address problems and opportunities as they arise.

Beyond creating a guide for the future, the process of strategic planning helps Mesa County Government:

- **Stimulate forward thinking and clarify future direction** – Strategic planning forces future thinking, highlights new opportunities and threats, and can refocus an organization's mission. Strategic planning provides a tool for an effective organization to stay sharp and focused.
- **Build teamwork and expertise** – Good planning results in several benefits for the participants: improved knowledge of the organization, better communication across levels and programs, and an increased investment in the organization.
- **Solve major organizational issues** – Productive planning focuses on an organization's most critical problems, choices and opportunities. The public sector sometimes faces a web of problems that are hard to address individually. Strategic planning is a way to resolve an interrelated set of problems in an intentional, coordinated way.
- **Improve performance** – Studies have consistently shown that vision, planning and goal setting can positively influence organizational performance.

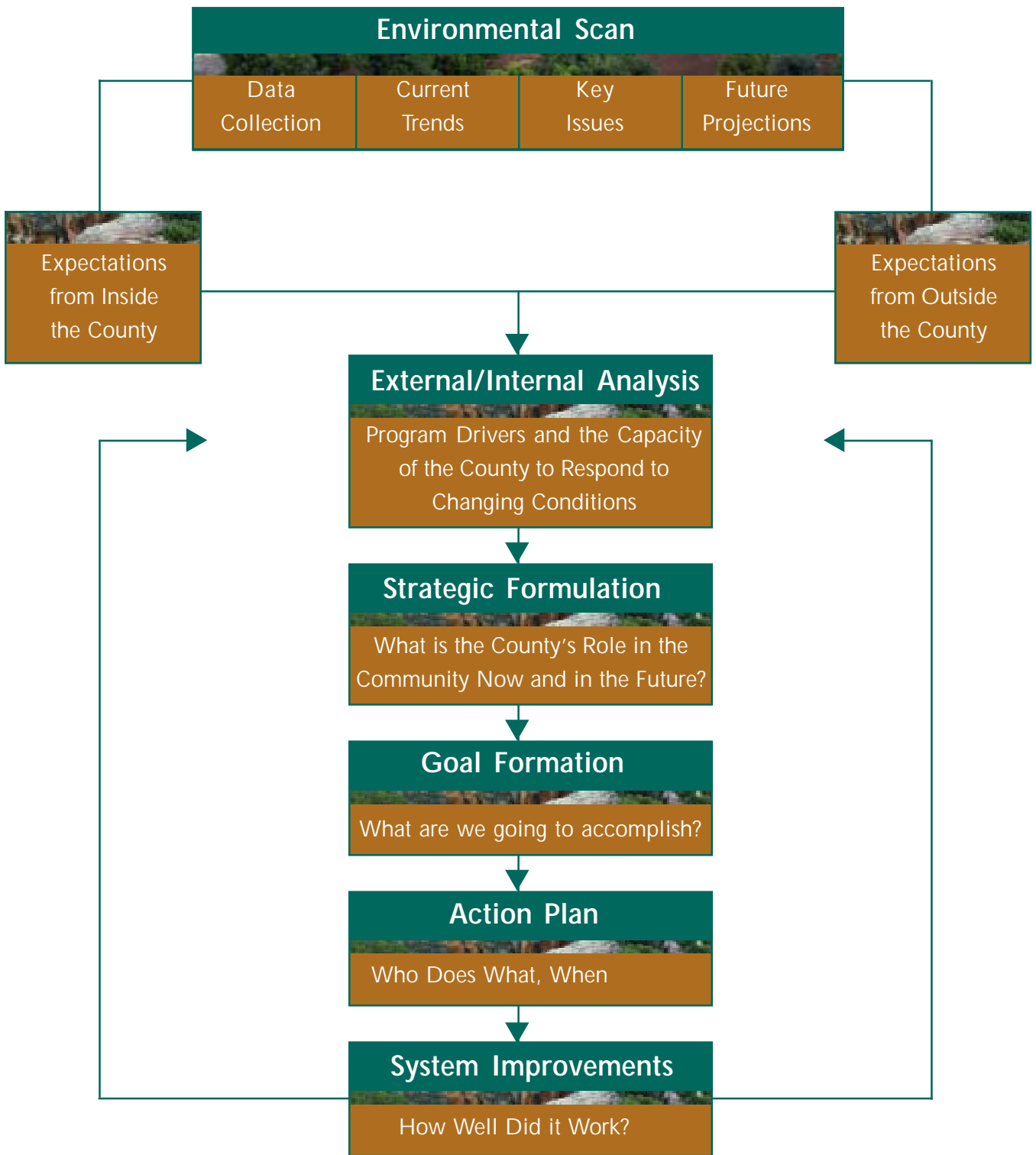
Mesa County Strategic Planning Framework

Every two years Mesa County updates its strategic plan based on an analysis of emerging issues, challenges and opportunities, and an evaluation of past plan performance (see Figure 1). Mesa County Commissioners, department heads, and elected officials took the following steps to prioritize issues and develop strategies for the 2003 update of Mesa County's strategic plan:

- **Step One - Data Collection and Analysis:**
Step one activities included compilation of the Mesa County 2003 Environmental Scan and administration of a statistically valid random sample telephone survey of Mesa County residents. Mesa County staff completed the *Mesa County 2003 Environmental Scan* which contains over seventy pages of background and trend data on social indicators, economic indicators, the physical characteristics of the County, and the political environment (available at www.co.mesa.co.us under "Current Topics"). The Mesa State College Bureau of Economic and Business Research was retained by the County to conduct a random-sample phone-based, citizen attitude survey. The sample was stratified to ensure that all parts of the County would be represented in the survey results. A total of 392 valid surveys were obtained, providing a 95% confidence level in the results. Finally, Mesa County Commissioners hosted a dinner with representatives from the governing boards of all municipalities in Mesa County. The purpose of the meeting was to solicit critical issues facing local governments in Mesa County, and strengthen working relationships and cooperation.
- **Step Two - Critical Issue Identification and Prioritization**
Seven teams of department heads, mid-level managers, the Board of County Commissioners, and other administrative staff were created. Each team was functionally organized by program area (Administration, Health and Human Services, Planning and Development, Property and Election Services, Public Safety, Public Works, and Support Services). Each team met with facilitators from Wade-Trim/Associates, Inc. to identify "critical issues" for subsequent use in step three (see Table 1).



Figure 1
Strategic Planning Sequence:
A Closed Looped System





■ **Step Three - Strategy Update (Mission, Goals and Objectives)**

Step three activities were facilitated by Wade-Trim personnel with the assistance of Project Innovations, Inc. on April 4, 2003, during a day-long retreat held at the Holiday Inn hotel. Attendees included department heads, mid-level managers, and the Board of County Commissioners. Phase three activities included an evaluation of the existing mission/vision statement; the development of goals which support high priority program drivers; and, the creation of objectives that identify target completion dates and person(s) responsible for ensuring their completion.



**Table 1
Higher Ranking Program
Drivers by Program Area
2003**

<u>Program Area</u>	<u>Higher Ranking Program Drivers (a)</u>
Board of County Commissioners, County Administration	Growth Management - from rural to urban Community Criminal Justice System engagement Transportation Healthy Local Economy
Public Works	Road and Bridge Maintenance C-Dot Funding Reduction Coordination between County Divisions Population Growth (Impacts)
Planning and Development	Master Plan Update Transportation/Level of Service Continuation of Transit Commitments AFT Zoning
Property and Election Services	Population Growth Changing Technology Post "Florida Election" legislation - education and equipment
Public Safety	Population growth impacts - from rural to urban More training/resources to keep up with societal changes Quality/effective communication with community
Health and Human Services	State reduction of funding Preparedness Early Childhood Intervention
Support Services	Project Financing Shift to an "urban culture" Need to economize to avoid layoffs

(a) Refer to Mesa County 2003 Strategic Planning Program Drivers report for a detailed definition of each issue.



Mesa County Critical Issues

What factors affect, or are likely to affect, Mesa County's ability to achieve its mission?

Growth

From 1990 to 2000 Mesa County's population grew by 24.8%, putting it in the top 10% of counties nationwide in terms of population change. The Colorado Department of Local Affairs projects that Mesa County's population will grow to 141,176 by 2010 (20.7% growth from 2000) and 194,075 by 2025 (65.9% growth from 2000).

- **Land Use Allocation and Management:** There is an increasing need to create a formal structure and process to deal with the complexities of the community to facilitate Smart Growth, to preserve the quality of life in Mesa County, and provide affordable housing. Coordination is needed between the Mesa County Master Plan (1996) and Mesa County Land Use Code (2000). There needs to be a clear structure that is realistic to the community. The two documents need to implement this vision
- **Demographic Impacts:** Mesa County's population is not only projected to grow, it is projected to change. Between 2003 and 2010, the second and third fastest growing age groups in Mesa County are projected to be 50-59 and 60-69. The fastest growing age group for the same period is projected to be 20-29. Historically, average per capita incomes for these three age groups in Mesa County have been below 80% of national per capita income. If these income trends continue, growth in these age groups will tax capacities of the Health Department, Human Services Department, and other service providers. When combined with projected reductions in state funding, the County will face serious challenges in maintaining delivery of effective services, e.g., public transportation, medicaid, affordable child care, etc., and in the availability of affordable housing.
- **Rural to Urban Cultural Shift:** Increases in population is one issue, transitioning from a rural to urban community creates a very different set of issues. Urban populations have different expectations for the availability of services and service levels provided by county government.

- **Road and Utility Capacity:** The capacity of our road and utility systems must keep pace with population growth, including: expansion and upgrades to the existing road network to accommodate a more dispersed traffic flow pattern; creation of an effective transportation grid that provides alternatives in access to locations; maintenance and expansion of the existing public transit system to accommodate alternative transportation needs; and construction of new roads where necessary.

Diagram 1

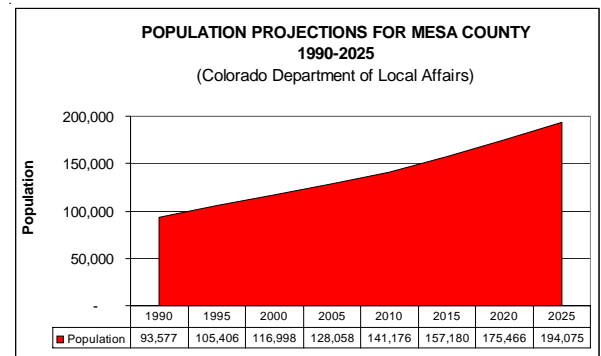
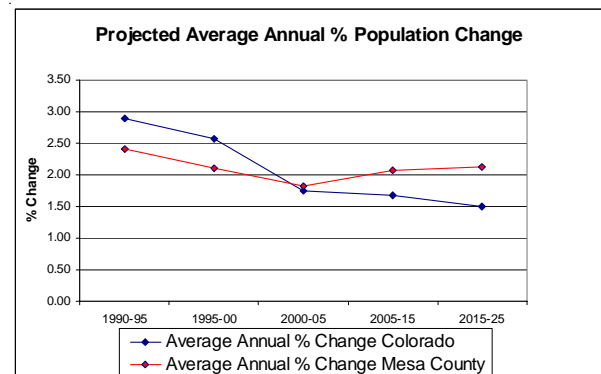


Diagram 2



Preparedness

Mesa County is confronted with issues both new and old that have a direct bearing on public health and safety. These include, but are not necessarily limited to SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), the West Nile Virus, homeland security, and natural disasters (floods, wild fires, etc.). Health care, emergency response, and law enforcement personnel are obligated to devote more resources to prepare for these and similar, yet undiscovered, challenges.



Quality of Life

- **Wages to Support Quality of Life:** According to 2000 U.S. Census data, the average per capita income in Mesa County is 82.5% of the national average and 74.7% of Colorado's average per capita income. From 1969 to 1999 average earnings per a job in Mesa County increased only \$77 a year when adjusted for inflation. The County's capacity to coordinate with other entities to encourage and support economic development is critical to improving this situation. The County needs an overall strategy that creates a partnership and collaboration of interested parties in the community. Economic development in Mesa County needs to focus on employment opportunities, wages, affordable housing, and affordable health insurance to provide a higher quality of life.
- **Early Childhood Intervention/Prevention:** The one area that provides the most effective "rate of return" on investing public dollars is in early childhood intervention. The Rand Corporation has published several reports demonstrating the cost effectiveness of early childhood intervention programs for at risk youths. In one report, Early Childhood Interventions: Benefits, Costs, and Savings (Rand Corporation 1998), it is estimated that governments save two to four dollars for every dollar invested in early childhood intervention programs.
- **Emergence of Troubled Areas:** Not all critical issues are tied to Mesa County's recent growth. Growth patterns associated with difficult economic times from oil shale, and uranium busts, especially during the early eighties, have left some areas of the County with inadequate physical and social infrastructure. As a result, these disadvantaged areas use a much higher proportion of many county services, especially public safety, health, human services, and code enforcement. Attention needs to be given to these geographic areas of concern by identifying and addressing their needs.

Criminal Justice

Mesa County's threshold for dealing with behaviors outside of its societal norms has resulted in more people being put in (or through) its criminal justice system. Maintaining a low tolerance will affect the

capacity of the system to perform as intended and may force a re-evaluation of community standards. We need better statistics in this area to understand the scale of the problem. County and municipal governments need better intergovernmental cooperation to determine effective and efficient standards.

Operational Demands

Across the board, state and federal funding reductions coupled with revenue restrictions (the Colorado Taxpayer's Bill of Rights and Gallagher Amendment) are making it increasingly difficult to meet expanding demands for service. Mesa County must develop processes and systems to collect, analyze, and use a broad variety of information about changing service demands so that the County can better align resource allocations with community needs.

Organizational Factors

- **Technology:** The most pressing concern is the ability to meet citizen and other governmental expectations for access to government records and information twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. Technology investments in a rapidly changing technical environment must be prioritized to best meet service needs with limited resources.
- **Interdepartmental Coordination:** Given the increased workloads that all departments are experiencing, communication and cooperation is absolutely critical.
- **Training:** All groups clearly expressed the desire for more staff to meet increased service demands. However, when asked to choose between more staff or better trained staff, the majority believed that training was more important to preserve public trust and retain experienced employees.





- **Communication (Public Outreach):** Mesa County does many things very well, but does not always take the time to tell the public. This is important for two reasons: (1) by educating the public, residents can take better advantage of services offered by the County; and (2) the employees of Mesa County are proud of what they do; expanded communication helps motivate employees by communicating what value they bring to the community.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Mesa County values its relationship with other governmental entities to serve the public. Partnerships cut across several issues, including, but not limited to economic development, public safety, land use and development patterns, public transportation, etc. Operationally, Mesa County is uniquely positioned to be a central repository of data and information in areas of common interest for local governments. Mesa County should continue to seek opportunities to collaborate and cooperate with other local governments, including sharing responsibility, costs, and solutions in areas of common concern.

Mesa County Critical Issues Areas

Growth
Preparedness
Quality of Life
Criminal Justice
Operational Demands
Organizational Factors
Intergovernmental Coordination





County Mission

What is the purpose of Mesa County Government?

County Mission

In partnership with citizens, Mesa County government will maintain and enhance quality of life by providing effective community services that ensure public health, safety, and well being.

County Slogan

Mesa County - Creating a community of opportunities for all residents with a focus on the future.

County Core Values

We Value:

Our Employee Team

- Strong work ethic
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Decisiveness
- Initiative
- Flexibility
- Accountability
- Pride
- Diversity

Credibility

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Fairness
- Equity
- Trust
- Truthfulness

The Quality of Our Performance

- Responsive
- Innovative
- Exceeding customer expectations
- Effective Services
- Cost efficient

The Golden Rule

- Value those we serve
- Patience
- Respect for others
- Compassion

Responsibility

- Courage
- Conviction
- Leadership
- Consistency
- Accountability

Teamwork

- Cooperation
- Collaboration within the organization
- Collaboration with other governments and community partners



Critical Issue: Growth - Land Use Allocation

Goal 1: Develop an Updated Master Plan

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Develop a vision that is supported by the BOCC	2003	BOCC, Planning Commission and Planning Director
2	Develop planning horizons and relative time increments	Early 2004	BOCC, Planning Commission and Planning Director
3	Complete updated Master Plan	2005	BOCC, Planning Commission and Planning Director
4	Identify costs associated with development and seek tools to fund it (CIP, impact fees, effectiveness of special districts in providing services)	2005	BOCC and Planning Director

Goal 2: Update Land Development Code

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Resolve 6.3.2 (AFT density issues)	12/31/2003	BOCC and Planning Director
2	Continually update/refine the land development code, e.g., landscaping, access regulations, etc.	Ongoing	Planning Director
3	Code enforcement -- refine definitions, regulations, and process	Late 2003	BOCC and Planning Director
4	Streamline land development code to provide a more responsive process for development	Ongoing	BOCC and Planning Director



Goal 3: Address Land Use and Transportation Access Needs for All Income Levels

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Provide for a variety of housing types in the community (accessible, affordable, desirable)	2005	BOCC and Planning Director
2	Encourage proximity of development to commercial services and employment centers	2005	BOCC and Planning Director
3	Encourage a variety of transportation modes (public transit, trails, automobile, bicycle, etc.)	2005	Regional Transportation Planning Director

Critical Issue: Growth - Road and Utility Capacity

Goal 1: Maintain and Envision a Transportation System to Current Level of Service

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Talk to model communities who have been successful maintaining road and utility capacity to support a growing population	06/01/2004	Regional Transportation Director & Public Works Director
2	Develop a set of models & measurements to analyze the transportation system, quantify and apply continuous process improvement	Ongoing	Regional Transportation Director, Public Works Director and Planning Director
3	Provide resources to maintain the County's road system at high level of service	Ongoing	Road & Bridge Supervisor
4	Continue to evaluate alternative transportation needs	Ongoing	Regional Transportation Director



Critical Issue: Emergency Preparedness

Goal 1: Develop a Comprehensive County System to Bring Together and Coordinate All Necessary Response Assets Quickly and Effectively (Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery).

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Continue to evaluate and coordinate the Fire and EMS system county wide	October 15, 2003	Emergency Manager
2	Agree to and implement options presented through evaluation process (standards developed)	May 1, 2004	Emergency Manager
3	Ensure the protection of county businesses, & government infrastructure are coordinated on a regional basis with neighboring cities and counties. (Continuity of Government)	Ongoing	Health Department Director
4	Revise County Disaster Plan	December 2004	Emergency Manager
5	Conduct annual County wide exercise	Annual	Emergency Manager
6	Hold a Mesa County preparedness workshop for agencies to update each other on preparedness status & coordinate activities	Ongoing	Health Department Director

Critical Issue: Quality of Life - Early Childhood Intervention/Prevention

Goal 1: Educate Community and Local Businesses Regarding Importance and Value of Quality Childcare

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Work with partners in quality childcare to increase business and community involvement in offering childcare	October 2004	Human Services Director
2	Involve faith based and community based organizations in County wide marketing campaign	April 2004	Human Services Director



Critical Issue: Quality of Life - Economic Development to Support Quality of Life

Goal 1: Participate in efforts that will increase employment opportunities and compensation packages so that the Average Per Capita Income (APCI) in Mesa County is brought in line with the national average, and the number of employed with health insurance is increased.

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	In cooperation with community partners, coordinate and participate in a process to define a vision and definition of economic development for Mesa County	December 2003	Board of County Commissioners and Administration
2	Develop alternatives for Mesa County's support of economic development activities and organizations	Ongoing	Administration
3	Foster the continued discussion around issues related to the provisions of health care coverage for the low income population	Ongoing – with report by April 2004	Department of Human Services Director
4	Work with community partners to identify and remove barriers to affordable housing	April 2004	Board of County Commissioners, County Administrator and Planning Director
5	Continue to identify high demand , higher paying occupations and develop training programs with community partners to meet the demand	Ongoing with yearly reports	Workforce Center Administrator
6	Ensure comprehensive, capital and other County plans contain provisions for adequate infrastructure, such as, but not limited to: fiber optics, sewer, roads, site accessibility and site appeal	Ongoing with annual review and reports	Planning Director, Public Works Director and Finance Director

Critical Issue: Quality of Life - Emergence of Troubled Areas

Goal 1: Identify Areas in the County That are Using Higher Than Average Levels of County Services (Public Safety, Health, Human Services, etc.), Develop and Implement Remediation Strategies

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Develop cross departmental team with representatives from the Sheriff's office, Department of Human Services, Health, Planning, Board of County Commissioners, School District 51, and other community partners to identify areas in the community that use a disproportionate level of public services, identify core problems, and develop action plans to help remediate areas	Ongoing	Sheriff and Assistant County Administrator



Critical Issue: Criminal Justice

Goal 1: Assess methods to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Mesa County.

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Coordinate community policing activities with the City of Grand Junction	Ongoing	Sheriff
2	Document best practices from other communities	Ongoing	Sheriff
3	Solicit public input regarding most desirable solutions	Ongoing	Sheriff

Goal 2: Develop and Implement Strategies to Manage the Jail Population and Reduce Jail Overcrowding

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Conduct analysis to determine who is being jailed, why, how long, etc.	Ongoing	Jail Administrator
2	Develop policy on arrest standards	Ongoing	Jail Over Population Committee
3	Implement plan to manage felony case flows	Ongoing	Judge Buss

Goal 3: Identify and Collect Better Statistics to Track People Put Through the Criminal Justice System

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Identify data and statistics that need to be tracked and analyzed	Ongoing	Jail Over Population Committee
2	Develop baseline information for comparison	Ongoing	Jail Over Population Committee
3	Monitor and analyze data on an ongoing basis	Ongoing	Jail Over Population Committee
4	Use data to make administrative decisions	Ongoing	Jail Over Population Committee



Critical Issue: Intergovernmental Coordination

Goal 1: Encourage Intergovernmental and Private Partnerships to Help Achieve the County Mission

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Continue to play a leadership role in coordinating the Grand Valley Joint Drug Task Force	Ongoing	Sheriff and BOCC
2	Continue to play a coordinating role in fire district communications	Ongoing	Emergency Manager and BOCC
3	Continue to play a lead role on the inter/intra addressing committee	Ongoing	911 lead, IMD Director
4	Regional Transportation Committee consensus on transportation projects and priorities for shared funding	Monthly	Regional Transportation Director
5	Continue Intergovernmental Agreement process with federal, state and local governments	Ongoing	BOCC and department heads
6	Continue Local Improvement and Public Improvement district process with neighborhoods	As Requested	BOCC and department heads
7	Continue partnerships with nonprofit and private organizations in areas of common interest	Ongoing	Department Heads

Critical Issue: Changing Operational Demands

Goal 1: Develop Strategies and Processes to Identify and Meet the Changing Expectations of County Government by its Many Constituents

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Develop processes and systems to regularly assess levels of service provided by each county department	July 2004	County Administrator and all County Department Heads
2	Identify service level gaps and strategies to address them	December 2004	County Administrator and all County Department Heads
3	Implement improvement strategies to ensure service meet community needs within resource limitations	Ongoing	County Administrator and all County Department Heads



Critical Issue: Organizational Factors

Goal 1: Mesa County Will Take a Leadership Role in Maximizing Inclusive Technology Strategies for Our Employees, Departments, and Citizens

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Facilitate integrated criminal justice information system – County wide	2 years	IMD Director, Sheriff and Criminal Justice Services Director
2	Develop IT systems that are functionally based while meeting unique departmental operating requirements.	2 years	All Department Heads
3	Increase and provide access for the public to County data and information	2 years	Department Heads, IMD Director, CATS Team Manager

Goal 2: Maximize Organizational and Individuals' Capabilities Through Broad and Specific Skill Training

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Improve proficiency of all employees in the use of the computer	Ongoing	IMD Director
2	Educate employees on the use of Mesa County Systems	Ongoing	IMD Director
3	Ensure that each County employee is trained in the core competency of their job	1 Year	All Department Heads
4	Provide a support system and training to our first line supervisors	1 Year	BOCC, County Administrator, Human Resources

Critical Issue: Internal and External Communications

Goal 1: Improve Internal and External Communications to Improve Public Understanding of the Services County Government Provides and Improve the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Services Delivery

	Objective	By When	By Who
1	Implement recommendations of communications steering committee (created in 2002) to improve internal and external communications	Ongoing	Communications steering committee



Several steps must be taken to ensure the successful implementation of the goals and objectives in this strategic plan update. Specific action steps should be developed for each objective. Action steps must be specific, measurable, and at the same time aligned with the annual budgeting process. Performance measures should be developed that track both plan implementation and outcomes. Measures should be tracked and reported on a regular basis to the Board of County Commissioners, County Administrator, Elected Officials, appointed department heads and the public. To these ends, the County Administrator will ensure that the following steps are taken:

1. **Work with those responsible for overseeing the implementation of objectives to develop specific action steps for plan implementation.**
2. **Development of performance measures to demonstrate plan accomplishments.**
3. **Create linkages with the budgeting process to support plan implementation as resources are available.**
4. **Strategic Plan Performance Reviews – review meetings with the County Administrator, the Board of Commissioners (in public hearing), and department heads will be held on a quarterly basis (more often if necessary) to report the status of Strategic Plan implementation.**

How to Review Strategic Action Plans

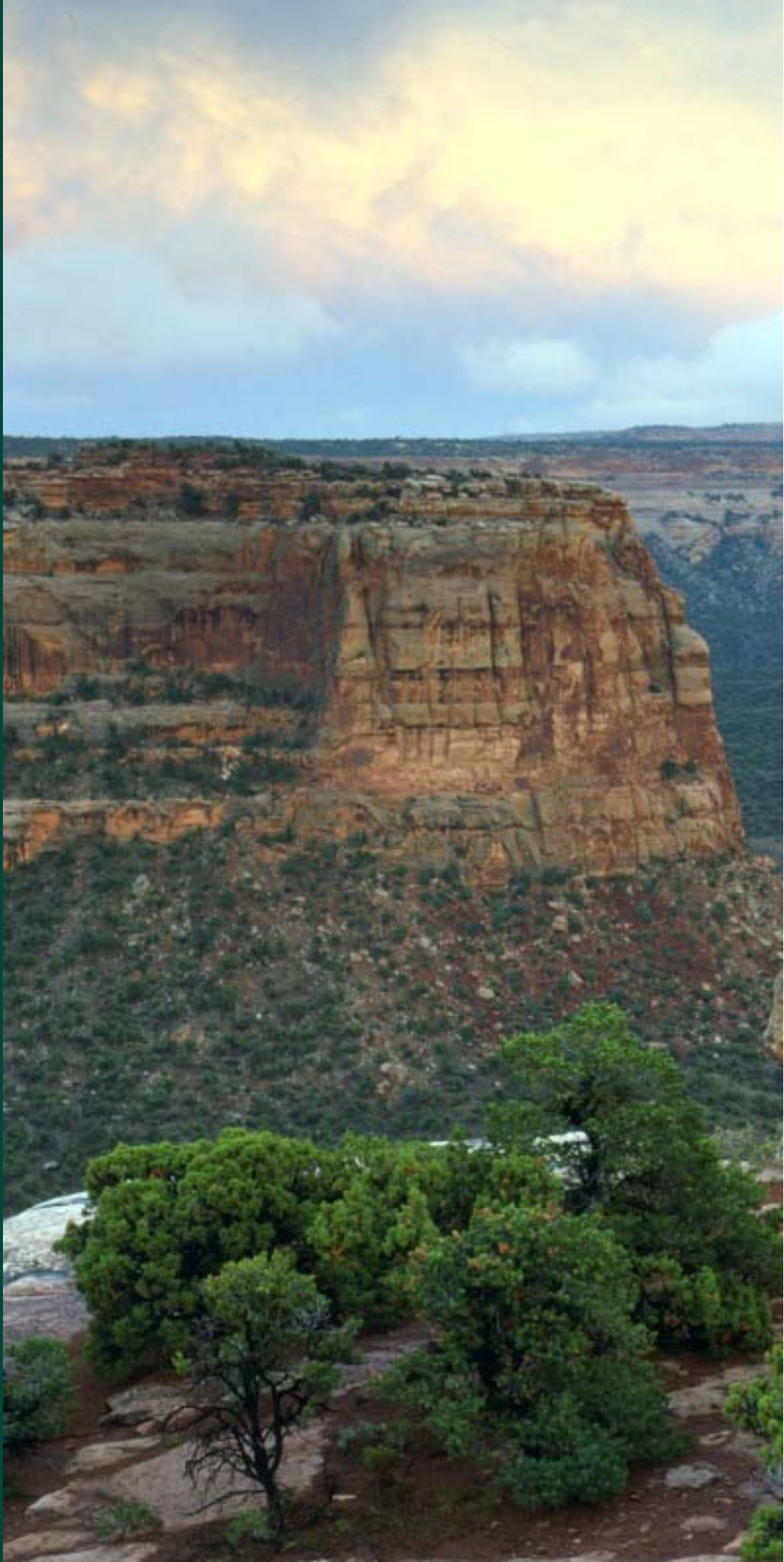
The logical way to review action plans is to look at them in the order of their due-date. Accordingly, the sequence shown for reviewing all actions plans is as follows:

1. Review all actions plans that are "*Past-Due*," or late, whose due-dates have already come and gone. These actions need to be completed and closed out. The only exception is that at times developments will occur that necessitate delaying an action plan "to the right," or much later in time. If that is the case, then simply move that action plan down your chronologically ordered list in the order of its new due-date.
2. The next set of action plans to review are those *due in the current month*.
3. The third review is a quick reminder of those action plans with *due-dates upcoming* by next month's meeting.
4. The last step ties in with our prior discussion on the final step of the Operations section - *the identification of new strategic action plans*. Here, make sure that all of these major new action plans are documented, clearly assigned, and have appropriate due-dates. You need to determine which emergent operating issues are of such significance that they earn the right to be added to the strategic action portfolio.

Done month to month, you will be amazed how much your team gets done, how current your strategic plan stays, and how fast you achieve the goals that have the greatest significance to your organization.

William Bean, Strategic Planning That Makes Things Happen, HRD Press, Inc. (1993), pgs. 240-241.





Wade-Trim
Project Innovations, Inc.