

A Vision, a Mission, and a Plan for Strategic Action in Washtenaw County, MI

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The purpose of this paper is to use the experience of the Washtenaw County Trial Court Family Division - Juvenile Center located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, as a case study to describe the strategic planning process. This paper describes strategic planning as an effective process for responding to change and preparing for a more productive future. Several specific strategic planning steps are highlighted, including: 1) assessing the organization's strengths and weaknesses; 2) identifying the basic beliefs that drive the organization; 3) creating a vision of a better organization; 4) articulating an agency mission and clear goals; 5) specifying goal-driven, measurable objectives; and 6) developing and implementing action plans to reach the mission-driven goals.

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Nothing stays the same. The march of time is inexorable and change is inevitable. Organizations that cannot adapt to change are doomed to failure at some point or another. Juvenile courts and juvenile court service agencies are as affected by change as any other organization. The ability to anticipate, document, and plan for change is, in fact, one of the hallmarks of effective juvenile probation organizations.

The purpose of this paper is to describe one court's efforts to manage change and conduct system reform through the strategic planning

process. Strategic planning provides an effective method for responding to change and preparing for a more productive future by: 1) honestly assessing the organization's strengths and weaknesses; 2) identifying the basic beliefs that drive the organization; 3) conjuring a vision of a better organization; 4) articulating an agency mission and clear goals; 5) specifying goal-driven, measurable objectives; and 6) developing and implementing action plans to reach the mission-driven goals.

In early 2001, the Washtenaw County Trial Court Family Division - Juvenile Center (WCTCFD-JC) located in Ann Arbor, Michigan was feeling the effects of the passage of time and the resulting changes both inside and outside of the organization. Court, community, and agency leaders were painfully aware of a number of serious problems affecting the health and well-being of the WCTCFD-JC. For example, one study noted that, in addition to a projected over-run of the juvenile court budget of almost \$2 million, case backlogs were significantly beyond established case-flow guidelines and the agency lacked specific performance standards (Plante and Moran, 2000). Another study revealed that case management practices in Washtenaw County lacked individualized risk-assessment tools, clear goals, action steps or time tables in treatment plans. In addition, tools or strategies to determine program effectiveness were non-existent (Holt and Thalharnmer, 2001).

Still another study cited lengthy time-frames for processing court orders, the absence of guidelines for determining when cases should be closed, and a lack of long-term strategic planning, direction, goals, or objectives (Stadnika, 2000). Furthermore, WCTCFD-JC had no formal evaluation/review process for its programs; nor did it have a comprehensive training program for staff (Ferry, 2001).

In the midst of all of this criticism, a policy decision was made to move WCTCFD-JC operations from a *social casework* model to a *juvenile probation supervision* model. Any one of these developments would have been cause for concern and action; collectively, they mandated a comprehensive, system-wide response to the way WCTCFD-JC conducted business.

To address these and other issues, the juvenile court contracted with the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) to facilitate a court-wide strategic planning and development process. Washtenaw County's strategic planning process featured joint leadership between the NCJJ consultant and a trusted internal staff member, comprehensive staff involvement and ownership, and input from a wide range of persons external to the organization (e.g., the Michigan Family Independence Agency, public and private child serving agencies, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and law enforcement) (Shaw, 2003).

Washtenaw County's strategic planning efforts were carefully implemented, comprehensive, and inclusive of all staff. They included a wide variety of meetings, workshops, and other activities that required substantial time and effort from a wide range of administrators, staff and key system partners, including:

- A thorough accounting and assessment of the existing continuum of interventions and services as well as documentation of gaps and resource needs;
- A series of system-wide strategic and action planning workshops;
- Goal prioritization and action plan development; and
- Establishment of staff-driven action-plan implementation teams.

Strategic Planning

Much of the work of juvenile courts and juvenile probation departments is conducted in a crisis mode. On any given day, juvenile court judges, administrators, supervisors, and staff are in the position of having to react to one or more crises in addition to carrying out their regularly scheduled day-to-day tasks. It is not surprising, then, that the notion of setting aside a substantial amount of time to plan for future events can seem quite unrealistic. However, taking the time today to plan for a better tomorrow can pay big dividends to an organization, not the least of which is to reduce the probability of having to operate in a crisis mode at some future date (Stenson and Thomas, 1997).

Strategic planning is a process for managing change in a systematic, organized, and intelligent manner before the organization becomes consumed by the consequences of uncontrollable or unanticipated events. Strategic planning provides an interactive forum for thinking through and creating the best possible future for an organization. It provides the dual benefits of involving key organizational stakeholders

in influencing and creating their future and in clarifying the direction of the organization. Strategic planning, however, is a complex process that requires a substantial commitment of time and energy on the part of both the organization and organizational stakeholders. Strategic planning usually requires the completion of several steps, including:

- identifying and involving stakeholders;
- identifying beliefs and values;
- creating a vision for the organization;
- articulating a mission statement;
- identifying mission-driven goals and objectives; and
- developing strategic action plans.

Key Organizational Stakeholders

Effective strategic planning is an inclusive and deeply participatory process. Too often, an agency's mission is the product of a single person or an elite minority within the organization. Mission statements developed in this manner are easy to ignore because they may not reflect the consensus-based beliefs of the organization nor is there "buy-in" from all aspects of the organization. It is essential, then, to identify and convene the people who can make a difference, the key stakeholders.

A stakeholder is "any person, group or organization that can place a claim on an organization's

attention, resources, or output” (Hudzik, 1994). All key stakeholders should be involved directly or represented at each stage of the strategic planning process. They should be invited to participate in the identification of organizational beliefs, visioning, and mission development. They should be actively involved in articulating or critiquing organizational goals, objectives, and priorities. They should also have opportunities to participate in the development of strategies and implementation of action plans.

The Washtenaw County Trial Court’s strategic planning process was inclusive; it involved all levels of professional and support staff. The probation department’s mission statement and vision resulting from that workshop reflected the consensus of the administration and staff of the WCTCFD-JC, from the juvenile court judge to diversion workers and crisis intervention specialists. A list of the strategic planning participants appears below:

- Juvenile Court Judge
- Juvenile Court Referees
- Trial Court Administrator
- Juvenile Center Administrator
- Probation Officers & Supervisors
- Reimbursement Officer
- Children’s Services Director
- Recorder
- Aftercare Workers
- Juvenile Court Clerks
- Diversion Workers
- Crisis Intervention Counselors
- Administrative Assistants
- Adoption Caseworker
- In-home Intervention Specialist
- Fiscal Coordinator
- Adoption/Diversion Supervisor

Core Beliefs/Values

An organization is stronger when it is grounded in the deep and abiding convictions of its members. The beliefs articulated during strategic planning should be simple and concise statements that represent the consensus thinking of the organization. While there should be a strong feeling of agreement regarding organizational beliefs, absolute unanimity is not required.

It is usually very difficult for a large group of individuals to achieve consensus around that group’s collective values and beliefs. The strategic planning process should allow for lengthy and sometimes heated discussion of individual beliefs. The process, however, should also include a time limit for discussions and an agreed upon “rule” regarding

what consensus means (e.g., 90% of all participants have to agree on the precise wording of a belief statement for it to be included).

The participants of Washtenaw County Trial Court’s initial strategic planning workshop worked long, hard, and sometimes contentiously to achieve consensus on what they believe in as an organization. The process began with a “brainstorming” session in which participants presented their personal beliefs to the larger group. This preliminary list of belief statements was combined and refined by the group with the help of a skilled facilitator. Later, the refined list was refined even further in terms of the precise wording and whether or not the statement represented a *bedrock* value of the organization. The end result of this exercise was the following list of core belief statements for the WCTCFD.

Core Beliefs: Washtenaw County Trial Court: Family Division - Juvenile Center

- Diversity and inclusiveness enrich each and every one of us and must be promoted, supported, and valued
- Mutual respect is essential to building positive relationships among staff and the community
- Individual accountability is essential; juveniles should be held accountable for their actions and juvenile courts should be accountable to their communities
- The safety of the staff, clients, and community is a priority
- Change represents an opportunity for growth
- Cooperation and collaboration promotes quality service and quality decision making
- Community involvement is critical to the rehabilitation of youth and their families
- Flexibility, creativity, and innovation are critical to organizational success
- Taking responsibility for one’s actions demonstrates integrity
- Fairness and justice are the cornerstones of juvenile justice practices

Articulate a Vision

The agreed upon beliefs form the basis of the organizational *vision*; a prophesy of a state or condition that does not presently exist, but could and, in fact, ought to exist. The vision represents a conceptual bridge from the present state of things to a future desired organizational condition. It provides a “minds-eye” portrait of the best possible state of the organization.

The organizational vision is driven by the highest priority values and beliefs of the organization. The “vision statement” should be developed by one or more of the strategic planning participants. The task of those chosen to articulate a vision is to combine the agreed upon core beliefs into a single vision statement. This may be completed in an ongoing process in which the chosen *visioning committee* submits several drafts of the vision statement to the remaining participants for their review, critique, amendments, and ultimately, approval.

The participants in the Washtenaw County Trial Court Strategic Planning Workshop produced a vision statement that reflected the agreed upon beliefs of that organization, including a desire to provide ser-

vices of *unparalleled quality* and a strong belief in an optimistic future for the organization, their community, juveniles, families, and victims. See sidebar below to read resulting vision statement.

Articulate a Mission

While a vision statement may be imprecise, the mission of the organization must be substantive and attainable. The mission may be regarded as the organization’s compass, pointing the way to the desired future. Effective mission statements clearly identify the purpose of the organization and the organization’s functions, clients, and roles. At their best, agency mission statements set internal goals and priorities for staff and create a common standard for evaluating individual and agency effectiveness. At their worst, agency missions provide ornate, but misleading, or clumsy proclamations that misrepresent the beliefs, goals and objectives of the organization (Bazemore, 1992). To be effective, mission statements must be:

1. specific to the organization;
2. developed by a broadly and deeply inclusive and participatory process;

3. the centerpiece of the organization;
4. dynamic;
5. inspirational to staff; and
6. the foundation of organizational accountability (Markley, 1994).

WCTCFD-JC’s mission statement (see below) was developed by the administrators and staff who participated in the two-day strategic planning workshop. Like the *vision statement*, the mission was articulated through a repetitive process involving a number of drafts and critiques by the workshop participants. It was adopted by a consensus vote of the strategic planning participants.

The mission was developed specifically to clarify the purpose of juvenile probation in Washtenaw County and to serve as the driving force behind system reforms and program enhancements. It is a dynamic, action oriented statement exhorting staff to *protect* children, *promote* safety, *restore* victims, and *increase* competencies. It is also dynamic in the sense that it was articulated with the understanding that it should be the driving force behind all policies, procedures, efforts, interventions, and programs of the WCTCFD-JC.

Vision Statement of the Washtenaw County Trial Court Family Division — Juvenile Center

We envision the WCTCFD-JC as a key contributor to safe communities, healthy youth and families, and self sufficient young people in Washtenaw County; and as an innovative, progressive, and unified organization of unparalleled quality in which professional staff and dedicated leaders are committed to providing or otherwise facilitating a comprehensive array of services to the children, youth, families, victims, and communities we serve.

Mission of the Washtenaw County Trial Court Family Division — Juvenile Center

“It is the mission of the Washtenaw County Trial Court Family Division — Juvenile Center to protect children, promote community safety, hold individuals accountable, restore victims, and increase the competencies of court-involved youth and families in partnership with the community.”

Identifying Mission-Driven Goals and Objectives

Good missions point organizations in the right direction. The journey suggested by the agency mission, however, requires explicit directions and careful planning. The mission suggests appropriate goals which, in turn, suggest measurable objectives. These serve as organizational signposts against which progress and success can be measured. A goal is an end toward which an organization's efforts are directed.

Goals are not ends in and of themselves; rather, they are the stepping stones leading to realization of the agency's mission. Organizational goals developed through strategic planning should be consistent with the mission of the organization. The goals should also be direct reflections of the organization's core beliefs. To be effective, they should be clearly and unambiguously stated. The goals established for the Washtenaw County Trial County Family Division - Juvenile Center are consistent with the basic beliefs identified during the strategic planning process, including: protection of juveniles and families, community safety, individual accountabil-

ity, building individual competencies, and collaboration with community-based resources.

Objectives are concrete, achievable indicators of progress toward organizational goals. They are expressed in measurable terms (e.g., time, money, amounts, quality) and clearly identify the results the organization will achieve as it fulfills its mission. They should also reflect what the organization hopes to achieve in the future as opposed to projections based on what it has achieved in the past.

Participants in the Washtenaw County strategic planning process identified a broad range of mission-driven and goal-oriented objectives. Time, staff, and resource limitations, however, required that participants prioritize and carefully choose those objectives that were both most pressing and most likely to be achieved. In a follow-up to the initial strategic planning workshop, WCTCFD-JC staff prioritized and chose four objectives:

1. Develop and document a graduated continuum of supervision for the WCTCFD-JC.
2. Define the purpose of juvenile probation and develop effective case supervision strategies.

3. Define an appropriate continuum of incentives and consequences for juvenile probation.
4. Enhance juvenile justice system responsiveness to victims of juvenile crime.

Developing Strategic Action Plans

Action plans document the specific steps required to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Effective action plans clearly define: 1) *what* each task is; 2) *who* is responsible for completing each task; 3) *how* the task will be accomplished; 4) *how much* effort is required in terms of time, money, and other resources; 5) *when* the task is to be completed; and 6) *what* outcomes to expect.

To achieve the objectives generated by its strategic planning process, the WCTCFD-JC established four teams. These *implementation teams* were instructed to research issues and options, develop action plans, and successfully carry out those plans. Juvenile probation staff volunteered to participate in the implementation teams based on their per-

Goals of the Washtenaw County Trial Court: Family Division — Juvenile Center

- Protect Washtenaw County's children at-risk of harm, victimization, or delinquency;
- Help all communities within the County to remain safe from victimization by juveniles;
- Hold juvenile offenders accountable for the obligations they have incurred by virtue of their actions against individuals and the community at large;
- Restore the confidence, safety, and property of victims of juvenile crime, wherever possible and to the extent possible.
- Increase competencies and abilities of court-involved juveniles and facilitating the ability of court-involved juveniles to live, unsupervised by the juvenile court, in the community; and
- Work actively and cooperatively with the citizens and communities of Washtenaw County to achieve these goals.

sonal interests and skills. The teams were coordinated by a staff supervisor who also served as the in-house planning and implementation coordinator.

The teams met weekly to develop and implement their action plans and to monitor progress. The implementation teams and the in-

house coordinator worked closely with the NCJJ consultant to inform the development process. Outcomes of these efforts are:

Table 1: Continuum of Services — Washtenaw County

Type of Intervention	Least Restrictive		Most Restrictive
<p><u>Prevention/Early Intervention:</u> First-time and repeat status offenders; rated high need/low risk on matrix</p>	<p>Youth and public education — Speaker's Bureau, court tour Summer sports camp Inquiry: Referral to community-based services Diversion - case work supervision Mediation</p>		
<p><u>Immediate Interventions:</u> Youth 8-17, first-time delinquent offenders, violent offenders, chronic property offenders, drug offenders</p>	<p>Probation Adjunct Community-based services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Probation incentives and sanctions - Anger management - Counseling resources - Detention and jail tours - Drug testing - Minor in Possession Weekend - Retail fraud class - Victim impact awareness - Community service work program <p>Sex offender supervision</p>		
<p><u>Intermediate Interventions:</u> Youth 8-17, first-time serious and repeat offenders, who fail to respond to immediate interventions</p>	<p>O'Brien Center (Day/Evening supervision) Intensive probation Night surveillance</p>		
<p><u>Community Confinement:</u> Offenders whose presenting offense is sufficiently serious or who fail to respond to intermediate interventions</p>	<p>In-home detention Electronic monitoring (tether) Secure detention Weekend boot camp</p>		
<p><u>Secure Residential:</u> Offenders whose supervision/ confinement in the community would constitute an on-going threat to community safety</p>	<p>Temporary court wards Act 150 commitment¹</p>		
<p><u>Aftercare:</u> Youth returning to the community from placement in public or private facilities</p>	<p>Court-ward aftercare Independent living</p>		
			<p>Waive to adult system</p>

¹Public Act 150 of 1974 (MCLA 803.309) as amended provides the basic foundation for services to delinquent state wards in Michigan.

Develop and document an appropriate continuum of services and interventions.

A critical component of the WCTCFD-JC strategic plan was to identify, assess, document, and where necessary, develop an appropriate continuum of services and interventions for juvenile court-involved youth.

The *continuum of services* action plan team identified four primary objectives that were aligned with the agency mission: a) identify all of the interventions, programs and sanctions available to the Washtenaw County juvenile court/probation department; b) create a detailed description of each of the existing programs, services, interventions, or sanctions; c) identify gaps in the service continuum; and d) develop detailed descriptions of desired programs, including minimum staff activities, standards, and expected outcomes. The results of those efforts are summarized in Table 1 (see previous page).

Develop effective probation supervision strategies.

The case management model historically used by the Washtenaw County Juvenile Center staff was inconsistent with the revised mission statement. Historically, juvenile probation had been conducted within the traditional context of social work, *parens patriae*, and rehabilitation. The revised mission places a greater emphasis on balancing community safety through effective supervision, individual accountability, victim restoration, and increasing offender competencies.

As a result, it became necessary to develop a new juvenile probation model. The *probation supervision*

planning team identified essential characteristics of juvenile probation, developed a juvenile probation supervision protocol, completed a field-test of the case supervision strategy, and developed and implemented a juvenile case supervision training module for juvenile probation supervisors and staff.

The *probation supervision planning team* defined juvenile probation as a legal status created by court order that permits an adjudicated offender to remain in the community, subject to supervision by a probation officer under conditions and restrictions imposed by the court, including treatment, sanctions, and revocations (Griffin and Torbet, 2000). Further, they determined that juvenile probation is a process that requires the active supervision of juvenile court-involved youth in the community for the purpose of achieving the inter-related goals of protecting the community, holding youths accountable, and increasing individual competencies.²

They identified four essential steps of effective juvenile probation. First, assess the needs, risks, and strengths of individual juveniles. Second, use the assessment results to develop individual supervision plans that carefully articulate goals, activities, timelines and expected outcomes for each case. Third, actively supervise cases and monitor progress; carefully execute the supervision plan, and make changes as needed. Finally, measure the performance of offenders, probation officers, and the department based on expectations articulated in the supervision plans.

Define an appropriate continuum of incentives and consequences for juvenile probation.

The goal of the *incentives and consequences planning team* was to identify and develop a range of incentives and consequences for enforcing or motivating compliance with conditions of probation and individual supervision plans.

The incentives and consequences developed by this planning team are consistent with the mission of WCTCFD-JC services and appropriate to the level of supervision. Specifically, the planning team defined the purpose and goals of supervision incentives and sanctions, defined key terms and concepts, identified appropriate parameters for using incentives or consequences, articulated operational principles, and defined targeted behavior and appropriate levels of incentives or sanctions. The team developed the following continuum of sanctions for behavior ranging from minor infractions to serious violations (see Table 2).

² To achieve these goals, juvenile probation officers are expected to conduct court-ordered investigations and supervise adjudicated juvenile offenders in the community. Juvenile probation officers may be responsible for the informal supervision of non-adjudicated cases.

Table 2: Continuum of Sanctions

Behavior	Consequences / Sanctions
Minor misbehavior/Failure to comply with conditions of probation/supervision plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assign essays, book reports, “educational videos” ■ Assign household chores ■ Adjust curfew: earlier curfew, more stringent monitoring ■ Increase level/frequency of contact ■ Assign or increase community service ■ Take urine screens
Chronic minor misbehavior/Misdemeanor violations/offenses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Arrange educational field trips - trauma burn center, animal shelter, retirement home ■ Tour jails ■ Assess fines to parents of truants ■ Place on day reporting status ■ Attend three day boot camp
Chronic lack of progress/refusal to comply with conditions of probation/supervision plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Place on night surveillance ■ Prohibit driver’s education/Restrict driving privileges ■ Place under house arrest ■ Place on electronic monitoring (tether) ■ Assign weekend detention
Serious violations of probation/new offenses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Place in secure detention ■ Revoke probation status - place on intensive probation or residential placement

The planning team defined *sanctions* as loss of reward or coercive intervention attached to a violation of conditions of probation as a means of enforcing those conditions. Sanctions, then, are pre-meditated and have coercive consequences.

An incentive is a motive, something that incites or has a tendency to incite to action. For case supervision purposes, an incentive is something that will cause probationers to move, on their own initiative, toward adhering to conditions of probation *or* requirements (e.g., curfew, daily school attendance, etc.) as well as specific goals of the supervision plan (e.g., complete anger management class, obtain GED, pay restitution, etc.). An incentive is a reward for compliance. Incentives, properly used, may be more powerful than sanctions in getting juveniles to conform with conditions of probation and the specifics of the supervision plan. The planning team identified the range of suggested incentives to encourage probationers

to behave well and complete probation requirements (see Table 3).

Enhance system responsiveness to victims of juvenile crime.

The *victims services planning team* was assembled to plan and enhance responsiveness to victims. More specifically, this team was charged with developing procedures and programming to enhance the ability of the juvenile court to hold youth accountable and address the needs of victims of juvenile crime. This team identified and articulated a model continuum of services for victims of juvenile crime that includes:

- victim sensitivity/impact training to juvenile court staff;
- a range of victim-focused community service projects;
- a restitution fund paid for through court fees;

- a victim impact/awareness class for juveniles;
- victim impact panels;
- a pamphlet produced and disseminated by the juvenile court that provides information regarding services for victims of juvenile crime and the rights of victims;
- increased communication and cooperation between adult and juvenile courts regarding victim needs and services;
- victim/offender mediation services; and
- a crime repair team.

While many of the action steps required to enhance Washtenaw County’s responsiveness to victims of juvenile crime will take time and additional resources to implement, the court has already taken positive steps toward accomplishing this ob-

Table 3: Continuum of Incentives

Behavior	Incentives
<p>Praiseworthy behavior/Consistent compliance with conditions of probation/supervision plan.</p> <p>Noteworthy behavior/behavior that exceeds supervision plan requirements.</p> <p>Exemplary progress/compliance with conditions of probation/supervision plan.</p> <p>Demonstratable evidence of accountability, remorse, victim empathy.</p> <p>Early completion of supervision plan requirements, demonstrated competencies, successful completion of treatment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Praise verbally ■ Write notes commending praiseworthy behavior ■ Provide an official letter from court commending behavior ■ Give prizes - stickers, t-shirts, caps, music cd's or tapes, sport equipment, stuffed animals, posters, and artwork ■ Take on field trips - museum, zoo, festivals, sporting events, plays, appropriate concerts ■ Provide opportunity to have lunch with probation officer/caseworker ■ Adjust curfew: later curfew, relaxed monitoring ■ Relax supervision ■ Reduce community service hours; assign more desirable community service projects ■ Waive or reduce court costs ■ Close case early

jective. For example, the court sponsored an interdisciplinary training workshop on victim sensitivity for WCTCFD-JC staff and other system partners. The workshop was conducted in October 2002 by an experienced victim's services trainer and attended by WCTCFD-JC staff and other system partners. In addition, the court has implemented a victim impact curriculum for court-involved youth.

Summary of Strategic Planning Activities

Between January 2001 and September 2002, the WCTCFD-JC engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning initiative to revise and update its approach to dealing with juvenile court-involved youth, policies, programs, and procedures. While system reform efforts are ongoing and continuous, the WCTCFD-JC accomplished a great deal in the first two

years of strategic planning, reform and development. These accomplishments are summarized in Table 4 (see next page).

The strategic planning initiative was not conducted in isolation. Indeed, the WCTCFD-JC has a number of ongoing system enhancement projects that dovetailed nicely with the strategic planning initiative. The cumulative results of past and current projects have positioned the WCTCFD-JC to achieve wider Trial Court objectives, including: 1) enhancing access to justice; 2) establishing expeditious and timely case processing; 3) assuring equality, fairness, and integrity; 4) promoting independence and accountability; and 5) increasing public trust and confidence. Other on-going reform efforts conducted by WCTCFD-JC are summarized in Table 5 (see page 11).

Requisites of Effective Strategic Planning

The success of the strategic planning initiative described in this paper can be attributed to the presence in Washtenaw County of several characteristics that are essential to effective strategic planning in any jurisdiction, including strong leadership, full participation, focused coordination of efforts, a commitment to the best available information, the willingness to take risks, and the skillful implementation of a thorough, consistent, and comprehensive planning strategy.

Leadership

Effective strategic planning requires leadership throughout the organization, from the highest levels to the

Table 4: Major Accomplishments of the WCTCFD-JC Strategic Planning Process

- Articulated a new vision and mission
- Developed a mission-based definition of and expectations for juvenile probation officers
- Developed and implemented mission-based strategic action plans
- Completed a systems analysis of the WCTCFD-JC's continuum of services and interventions
- Produced a detailed description of WCTCFD-JC's continuum of services, interventions, and sanctions
- Provided Fundamental Skills for Juvenile Probations Officers training to all juvenile court staff
- Developed performance standards for administration, supervisors, and staff
- Developed procedures for probation case assessment, planning, and measuring outcomes.
- Developed a continuum of incentives and sanctions for juveniles under supervision
- Developed a strategy for enhancing services to victims of juvenile crime

front-lines. Leadership may be defined as the “art and practice of influencing others toward organizational attainment” (Pace and Matlock, 1997). Leadership from the top of the organization demonstrates an organizational commitment to implementing the desired strategies. Leadership from the line-level reflects staff “buy-in” to the strategic planning process.

There were no shortages of leaders in WCTCFD-JC's strategic planning effort. The Washtenaw County Trial Court Juvenile Court Judge supported the strategic planning process wholeheartedly and, in fact, was an active participant in the articulation of organizational beliefs and the development of the organization's mission statement. Because the juvenile court judge established the strategic planning process as a high priority for the organization, the mission, the strategies, and the action plans developed through that process became high priority items for the organization.

In addition to the Supervisory Judge, the Trial Court Administrator for the Washtenaw County Trial Court and the Juvenile Division Administrator were supportive, committed, and deeply involved in all aspects of the strategic planning

process. They participated in strategic planning activities, reviewed preliminary and final products, encouraged staff participation, and provided staff with the time and other resources to participate in the planning process and develop and implement action plans.

Supervisors and line staff were also instrumental in providing leadership for the strategic planning process. Supervisors participated in the full range of planning activities, encouraged line staff to participate, and facilitated planning meetings and action plan implementation. Many line staff actively participated in all planning activities and several served as team leaders for action plan development and implementation.

Clearly, the Washtenaw County strategic planning process was a “top-down/bottom-up” planning and development initiative with strong leadership from all aspects of the organization.

Full Participation

Effective strategic planning requires participation from all levels of the organization. Top-down stra-

tegic planning is likely to fail to capture the reality of the day-to-day efforts of the organization; bottom-up strategic planning is unlikely to garner the approval and authority of organizational leaders. As a result, it is important to involve the full range of juvenile court staff in the strategic planning process.

The WCTCFD-JC strategic planning initiative represented a system-wide effort involving virtually all judicial officers, administrators, supervisors and staff. The initial information gathering phase entailed the collection of data from all key juvenile court staff through a survey, individual interviews, and focus groups. Most significantly, however, the WCTCFD-JC juvenile court staff were heavily involved in the strategic planning process, development of specific action plans, and the completion of those action plans.

Forty staff members (over 86% of WCTCFD-JC's total staff) participated in the original 2 ½ day strategic planning workshop. The participants included the full range of WCTCFD-JC administration and staff, including the juvenile court judge, juvenile court referees, court clerks, clerical staff, the trial court administrator's office, and probation administration, supervisors,

Table 5: Complementary System Reform Initiatives

- On-going mission-driven staff training and development
- Continuous review and revision (as necessary) of policies and procedures
- Implemented victim impact awareness training for court-involved youth
- Enhanced case-flow management through improved clerical support and training
- Merged clerk/recorder unit
- Initiated bi-yearly reviews of program implementation, assessment of needs, review of outstanding recommendations, and goal planning
- Revised adoption procedures and enhanced adoption data management
- Posted all adoption requirements, procedural guidelines, and forms on court web page
- Initiated collection of delinquency program outcome data
- Developed community work service committee to enhance community service options
- Developed strategies to increase probation department visibility and involvement in community
- Planned a multi-county initiative to develop shared juvenile justice data management system

and staff. Subsequently, another sub-set of WCTCFD-JC staff was convened to prioritize objectives and develop an action plan for implementing strategic planning goals. To reinforce the inclusive nature of the planning process, the implementation teams formed to complete the action plans were comprised of WCTCFD-JC probation staff and supervisors. Finally, all of the strategic planning efforts were subject to review, critique, and suggestions from judicial officers, administrators, supervisors, and line staff.

Focused Coordination of Planning Efforts

Strategic planning is a complex, multi-tiered process that takes place in the context of an already busy organizational environment. Focused coordination of all strategic planning efforts is a hallmark of effective strategic planning. This was clearly the case in Washtenaw County where the strategic planning process lasted almost two years, involved virtually all staff members, required multiple workshops and planning meetings, resulted in the development of at least four planning teams, and

produced a wide range of policy changes, new and revised procedures, detailed program descriptions, and additional plans for the future. Furthermore, the Washtenaw County strategic planning effort was not conducted in isolation. The strategic planning initiative was just one of several large scale initiatives that involved the WCTCFD-JC directly or indirectly.

Coordination of all of these activities was provided throughout the life of the initiative by one of the WCTCFD-JC Supervisors. It must be mentioned, however, that all the strategic planning coordination efforts were provided in *addition* to that Supervisor's other duties. The *strategic planning coordinator* served many roles, including liaison to the National Center for Juvenile Justice, strategic planning project manager, meeting organizer, staff trainer, and coordinator for all of the *planning teams*. In addition, the *strategic planning coordinator* documented all of the activities and products of the strategic planning process. The energy, commitment, and organizational ability of the *strategic planning coordinator* were critical to the success of the initiative.

Best Available Information

Positive change is based on the best available knowledge. Failure to keep up with the best available knowledge will doom the organization to failure (Steenson and Thomas, 1997). While strategic planning begins with *beliefs* and *values*, ultimately, strategic plans must be implemented in a concrete, physical environment and should produce measurable outcomes. To assure that mission implementation and program development have the greatest chances for success, it is important to have current, accurate, and reliable information about the organization, its environment, its clients, and the outcomes of that organization.

WCTCFD-JC made every effort to obtain and provide the best available information as the foundation for building its strategic action plans. The leadership took advantage of a number of sources to identify and procure the best available information, including juvenile court data, previous studies and reports, existing program descriptions, juvenile justice program literature, the experience of other jurisdictions, and the collective knowledge and

experience of juvenile court judicial officers, administrators, and staff.

In addition to existing studies, reports, and audits addressing WCTCFD-JC operations, the project management teams made full use of technical assistance and training opportunities provided by NCJJ, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJJ's parent organization), victim services consultants, and other available technical assistance, training, and information dissemination resources.

WCTCFD-JC administration and staff also took advantage of the experiences of other jurisdictions through cross-site consultation and site visits. For example, representatives of the juvenile court staff participated in a cross-site technical assistance visit to the Allegheny County (Pittsburgh, PA) Juvenile Court to observe the effects of Allegheny County's successful strategic planning process on its continuum of services and interventions for juvenile court-involved youths. Other juvenile court jurisdictions in Michigan were consulted regarding issues related to balanced and restorative justice, victim services, community service, and restitution collection.

Willingness to Change

Effective strategic planning requires the willingness and commitment to critique the entire organization, not just bits and pieces of the organization. Nothing is sacrosanct; all facets of the organization must be open to scrutiny and change. There is often a natural tendency among administrators and staff to protect their "turf" or to shield pet projects and favored procedures. However, it is important to critically view the full scope and breadth of

the organization in the context of the new or revised organizational mission.

The administrators and staff of the WCTCFD-JC are not exceptions to the rule and had many long-standing and popular programs, procedures, and policies that had to be critically evaluated. For example, even the working definitions of their positions were critically evaluated and re-defined. Some employees had, for years, considered themselves to be "caseworkers" in the social work model. However, the modern realities of juvenile delinquency forced the staff to re-evaluate their roles and to re-define those roles more closely to a juvenile probation officer model. While this was a difficult task with many repercussions for their day-to-day work lives, the staff did not shy away from re-defining their roles within the context of the balanced and restorative justice juvenile probation model.

Well Designed and Carefully Executed Strategic Planning Process

The key to success in any complex endeavor is to plan carefully and to carefully follow your plan. The *strategic planning process* provides a time tested and proven methodology for planning for a better future for your organization and your organization's "clients."

A skilled facilitator is essential to reaching consensus on beliefs, articulating a vision and a mission, identifying goals and objectives, and developing action plans. The WCTCFD-JC was fortunate to have identified a career juvenile probation officer who is also a

skilled and experienced strategic planning facilitator to guide them through the critical early stages of the strategic planning process.

The administration and staff of the WCTCFD-JC did not deviate from the planning process. They carefully identified and articulated fundamental organizational *beliefs and values*. They used those beliefs and values to articulate a *vision* for the organization and create a new statement of *mission*. They used that mission to identify clear *goals* and measurable *objectives* for the organization. They conducted a careful *systems analysis* to identify existing resources, strengths and weaknesses, and prioritize required system enhancements. They developed clear strategies for achieving desired system reforms and established clearly defined action plans with measurable outcomes.

By carefully following the strategic planning process, the WCTCFD-JC was able to navigate through a complex series of tasks and activities toward known objectives. At the same time, they established a consistent record and provided documentation for determining the success of the planning effort and to establish a foundation on which both ongoing system reform efforts and future strategic planning initiatives may rest.

Measuring the Performance of the WCTC – FD / JC: A Report Card

The WCTF – FC / JC identified six major goals during its strategic planning process. The sixth of these goals was to work actively and cooperatively with the citizens and communities of Washtenaw County to achieve the five preceding goals. To this end, the WCTC – FD / JC

implemented a strategy developed by the National Center for Juvenile Justice for collecting, processing, and reporting program outcome data.³ Mission-driven, performance-based outcomes are essential ingredients to effective program management and collaboration with key system actors, including community partners. Washtenaw County's strategic action planning process provided the clearly articulated mission, mission-based goals, and measurable objectives that are necessary prerequisites to measuring performance.

The performance measures adopted by the WCTC – FD / JC are linked directly to the organization's core values through its mission, goals, and objectives. All outcome data are collected at the time of case closing. The Report Card presents outcomes from both status offense cases and probation supervision cases. The Report Card presents data in the following categories:

- **Demographic Characteristics:** Gender, race, age, school placement, and reasons for referral.
- **Status Offense Outputs:** Referrals to court or community-based resources, status at case closing, and school attendance.
- **Probation Outcomes:** These outcome measures address summary measures for three mission-driven goals, including community protection, accountability, and competency development.

Community Protection outcome measures include: average length of supervision; new adjudications while under supervision; serious violations of probation, placed on electronic monitoring or home detention while under supervision, and drug screening results.

Accountability outcome measures include: community service work hours assigned / completed; restitution ordered / paid; court costs, fines, and fees ordered / paid; letters of apology to victims; participation and completion in victim awareness class.

Competency Development outcome measures include: participation and successful completion of skill building and social adjustment services, counseling; and school attendance.

The Report Card on page 14 summarizes the case characteristics and the performance of the WCTC – FD / JC for 71 status offense cases and 307 probation cases closed between January 1, 2003 and December 31, 2003.

Status Offense Cases: Sixty percent of status offense cases were closed as fully or moderately successful completions. Only 17% were considered to be “unsuccessful” cases. Over 100 referrals were made to court or community-based resources, including family counseling, substance abuse counseling parenting classes, anger management classes, summer school or tutoring, community work service and weekend boot camp. School attendance increased in about three quarters of the cases at the time of case closing.

Probation Cases: Almost two-thirds of the probation cases were closed as successful or moderately successful completions. About three quarters (73%) of the cases were closed without a new adjudication while under supervision. The probation cases accounted for almost 7,500 hours of community service and almost \$47,000 in restitution payments. A letter of apology to the victim was written in 57 of the cases. Eighty-

nine percent of the referrals to skill building and social adjustment programs were successfully completed; as were 71% of the referrals to counseling programs. School attendance was increased (35%) or maintained (57%) in 92% of the cases closed. The juveniles in 85% of the cases were involved in one or more pro-social activity at the time of case closing, including attending school, pursuing a G.E.D., or employed.

³ Thomas, Douglas. (2003). *Measuring Performance of Pennsylvania's Balanced and Restorative Justice Initiative: Phase III Final Report*. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice.

Concluding Remarks

In the early part of 2001, the administration and staff of the Washtenaw County Trial Court Family Division – Juvenile Center were confronted with well-documented evidence that time was taking its toll on the organization and that the world in which it operated had changed dramatically. WCTCFD-JC was faced with projected budget over-runs, lengthy case processing times, case backlogs, a lack of performance standards, and no strategies to demonstrate program effectiveness. In the middle of these challenges, a decision had been made to change WCTCFD-JC's approach from a juvenile case work model to a juvenile probation supervision model.

In response to these conditions and changes, Washtenaw County initiated an aggressive and comprehensive strategic planning process that included: an honest assessment of its strengths, weaknesses, available resources, and needed resources; the careful and inclusive identification of the core values on which the organization should be based; and

**Table 6: Juvenile Probation Department Mid-Year Report Card
January 1, 2003 — December 31, 2003**

STATUS OFFENSE CASES (N=71)

Gender		Race		Age		School Placement	
■ Male	34 (48%)	■ Caucasian	42 (59%)	■ 6-10:	18 (25%)	■ Elementary	20 (28%)
■ Female	37 (52%)	■ African American	27 (38%)	■ 11-12:	12 (18%)	■ Middle	23 (32%)
		■ Other	2 (03%)	■ 13-14:	23 (32%)	■ High	28 (39%)
				■ 15-16:	18 (25%)		

Reason For Referral: Educational Neglect 32 (45%) Incorrigibility 7 (10%) Truancy 32 (45%)

Outputs: 123 referrals to court or community-based resources, including: Family Counseling; Substance Abuse Counseling; Parenting Classes; Anger-Management Classes; Summer School/Tutoring; Community Work Service; and Weekend Boot Camp.

Outcomes: Status at Case Closure

- Successful or moderately successful 42 (60%)
- Closed early, referred for services, or placed on probation 9 (13%)
- Unsuccessful intervention 12 (17%)
- Other 8 (11%)

Summary Statistics:

- 52 (73%) youth increased school attendance at the time of case closure
- Average attendance pre-intervention: Less than 60%
- Average attendance post-intervention 80%

PROBATION CASES (N=307)

Gender		Race		Age		School Placement	
■ Male	211 (69%)	■ Caucasian	157 (54%)	■ 12 or less:	15 (05%)	■ Elementary	4 (01%)
■ Female	96 (31%)	■ African American	112 (36%)	■ 13-14:	47 (15%)	■ Middle	50 (16%)
		■ Biracial	10 (03%)	■ 15-16:	146 (48%)	■ High	241 (84%)
		■ Hispanic	13 (04%)	■ 17-18:	97 (32%)		
		■ Other/Unknown	22 (07%)				

Reason For Referral:

Assault 85 (28%) Property 57 (19%) Theft 77 (25%) Drug 45 (15%) Public Order 22 (17%) Status 2 (02%)

Community Protection

- Average length of supervision (months) 6.5
- New adjudications 27%
- Violations of probation 26%
- Electronic monitoring/home detention 13%
- Drug screen results
 - Screened 93
 - Total screens 461
 - Total negative 226

Offender Accountability

- Community service 7,445
- Restitution paid \$46,952
- Costs, fines, and fees \$15,545
- Letter of apology 57
- Victim awareness 47

Competency Development

- Skill building and social adjustment
 - Referred 109
 - Successfully completed (89%)
- Counseling
 - Referred 206
 - Successfully completed (71%)
- Education (attendance)
 - Increased 35%
 - Maintained 57%
 - Decreased 4%

Summary Statistics:

- Status as case closing
 - 62% successfully or moderately successful completion
 - 38% unsuccessful completion
- Engaged in pro-social activity
 - 85% actively engaged in school, pursuing a GED, or employed at time of case closing

the means for achieving consensus regarding an organizational vision, mission, goals, objectives, and expected outcomes. The strategic planning process has resulted in a new mission for the agency, an enhanced continuum of services, greater clarity in terms of agency goals, objectives and practices, and the identification of mission-driven performance indicators. The strategic planning process also resulted in comprehensive strategies designed to guide the agency toward a future of its own design, as opposed to a future dictated by forces beyond its control.

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