



OREGON

MARION COUNTY

STRATEGIC ISSUES STATEMENTS AND COUNTY GOALS

Marion County

Marion County Strategic Issues Statements

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND QUALITY SERVICE

Goal #1: *Ensure efficient, effective and responsive government.*

Background: Various studies of Marion County's operations have concluded that some systems and administrative functions within departments and among departments operate as stand-alone or independent "silos." Currently there are a number of systems that do not work together, business processes that are not consistent across departments and processes that should happen but can't because of current system configurations. Marion County needs to overcome these barriers to efficiency.

Recently the county began an effort to streamline and standardize a variety of business processes and to make better use of the capabilities of the current accounting and financial management information system. The purpose is to consolidate systems, take better advantage of capabilities of existing applications, streamline business processes and workflows and have administrative functions work together across the county enterprise wherever possible. The goal is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of business functions countywide and generate better information for the commissioners and department directors to make decisions about the use of county resources. That translates into improved accountability to the people and communities we serve and better stewardship of the public's trust. Marion County is also working to increase productivity, efficiency, responsiveness and quality through an intensive analysis of county job functions and organizational structure.

While Marion County has always had a strong commitment to providing quality service to customers, historically it has not had a countywide customer service program. Various county departments have implemented their own processes and procedures to provide good customer service, but there have not been unifying policies and programs. Marion County needs such a unifying program structured in a way that defines good customer service, communicates a vision for excellence in service and hold all employees accountable to a high standard of service delivery that is consistent across all Marion County departments.

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GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal #2: *Provide leadership and direction that addresses the challenges and opportunities that come with the continual growth and diversity of Marion County's population. Sustain an organization that focuses resources on smart, healthy growth options which best meet the needs of Marion County residents and help build a climate that is friendly to business.*

Background: Population forecasts show that Marion County is expected to grow from its current population of just over 300,000 residents to a population of nearly 350,000 by the year 2015. Growth shows a steady upward trend for the next 25 years following 2015, with population levels forecasted to reach 450,000 by the year 2040. While the population is growing, it is also becoming more diverse. The county has the largest percentage of Hispanics in the state, approaching 20 percent.

Land supply is another critical issue. As the county's population has grown, developers have moved quickly to keep pace with the increasing demand for housing and commercial facilities. Challenges to Oregon's land use system and the need to balance competing interests including agricultural and commercial development will be felt most strongly in Marion County, which is the largest producer of Oregon's agricultural income.

As growth continues, the county will be faced with questions about the shared urban growth boundaries between the cities of Keizer and Salem and the need for land supply to serve residential, business and economic development interests of both communities. Because of these challenges, it will become increasingly important for Marion County and its communities to do comprehensive land use planning that seeks to balance urban and rural interests and to collaborate on the planning and development of infrastructure such as water systems, drainages and waste disposal.

While the urban areas of the county are experiencing rapid growth, some rural communities are facing decreasing population and the challenge of becoming more isolated with less access to services given the increasing demand to target resources to the areas where there is more growth. Some smaller communities also face the challenge of the paying the costs of maintaining infrastructure with decreased available revenue to pay for needed improvements.

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Affordable housing will be another challenge, particularly in the urban areas. The county's Housing Authority shows a shortage of affordable housing for those eligible in the face of level or reduced funding from federal revenue sources. Transportation, medical, health, senior services, education and jobs are fundamental services that need to be integrated into the development of affordable housing for families, seniors, and people with disabilities. Agencies affiliated with each of these services can play a vital role in a holistic approach to the sustainable, smart and healthy growth for the most vulnerable members of Marion County communities.

Managing the county's groundwater and drainage systems is another important area of focus. Due to expanding population, groundwater supplies are in question and must be protected and managed. Continued development is also placing demands on Marion County's drainage systems. Replacement of outdated and undersized facilities will need to be addressed as well as preserving lands for regional stormwater detention facilities while it is still available. New regulations will require improvements to help protect surface runoff and ensure compliance with Clean Water Act requirements.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Goal #3: *Protect the people, property and economy of Marion County by pursuing a safe and secure community. This is achieved through a balanced, collaborative and coordinated public safety system that can be efficiently supported and sustained into the future.*

Background: The majority of communities, citizen groups and county employees have identified public safety, specifically the interlinked issues of drugs (methamphetamine, in particular), gangs, availability of a continuum of juvenile services, adequate jail space and law enforcement resources as the most significant issue facing Marion County now and in the future.

Eliminating the manufacture, distribution and use of illegal drugs in Marion County, providing the necessary jail space to house the criminals who engage in drug, gang and related activities, providing adequate substance abuse treatment alternatives, implementing a continuum of risk mitigation interventions for adolescents, and preventing harm to children, youth, adults and families in the county's communities will continue to be a significant issue for the near future. Widespread drug use and gang activity are public safety issues for both the adult and juvenile public safety systems.

The impact of mental illness on the criminal justice system cannot be ignored. More than 30% of all adult offenders in jail are mentally ill pointing to a need for adequate mental health treatment programs and services. Adolescent mental health issues, especially when co-occurring with substance abuse, create a significant impact for the juvenile justice system.

Focused interventions at earlier ages along the continuum, including additional family members, can positively impact multiple issues and generations. These types of intensive interventions require concentrated contacts and effective brokering of needed services for youth served by the county's Juvenile Department.

As these services are delivered, it is critical that Marion County public safety partners increase victims' understanding of their rights and of the public safety system and provide progressive services and referrals that assist them in making more informed choices in their lives.

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Ensuring balance across the criminal justice system and adequate capacity among all of the components of the public safety system to address these issues are vital.

The complexity of this issue, along with the significant needs across the continuum of youth to adults, points to the need to identify, coordinate and advocate for a cost-effective public safety system that is supported by evidence-based programs that will meet the needs of the local community. Communities also need to encourage and promote healthy lifestyles and provide healthy, drug-free alternative, affordable activities for residents of all ages through increasing public education and awareness.

Finally, there is a growing need for greater inter-communication among various law enforcement and public safety agencies in Marion County, as well as other jurisdictions in Oregon, including inter-operability issues of voice and data communication systems.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal #4: *Promote economic and workforce development opportunities for Marion County residents, businesses and local communities by encouraging a diversified and expanded economy.*

Background: In Marion County, several large employers have closed down or left the area, resulting in large holes both in the workforce and in the local tax base. Per capita personal income for Marion County, while on the rise since 1981, still lags behind the state and the nation. Since 1990, per capita income has risen from about \$24,000 to about \$26,000, an increase of only \$2,000. Average annual wages have risen to about \$31,000 from a low of about \$27,500 in the late 1980's. However, when adjusting for inflation, average wages are still below where they were in 1977. Keeping our workforce skilled so that the county can attract and retain employers who offer family wage jobs will need to be a continued area of focus.

Marion County is the top agricultural producer in the state in terms of gross sales. The agriculture industry has experienced steady economic growth for many years due to wise management of the land, diverse soils, adequate water supplies, good transportation systems, a well trained and adequate labor force and an ability to diversify and market products. However, increased fuel costs, labor shortages, water supplies and pressure to develop land threaten the long-term health and viability of agricultural enterprises. A strong research and education program is critical to evaluating new farming methods and products so that agriculture remains profitable. Marion County should continue to work with partners in exploring a wide variety of ways to support agriculture enterprises.

Marion County's economy is subject to market changes. Diversity in the economy is necessary for stability, and while the focus of many economic development efforts has been to promote family-wage traded sector jobs, keeping the county's economy diversified remains a challenging issue. Continued partnerships with SEDCOR, other local economic development groups, and the Jobs Council/Workforce Investment Board will be crucial to investing lottery funds and federal dollars into efforts that will result in recruitment and retention of businesses that offer family wage jobs and ensuring Marion County's workers are skilled and competitive in the labor market.

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Marion County must continue to streamline permitting processes to reduce red tape and promote a friendlier climate for business and regularly review zoning ordinances and other rules to promote economic development without negatively impacting livability.

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TRANSPORTATION

Goal #5: *Provide a safe, efficient and reliable transportation system by ensuring a well-planned, well-maintained and cost-effective transportation infrastructure.*

Background: The need for traffic flow and safety improvement projects is increasing rapidly. At the same time, funding levels are not keeping pace with demand or steadily rising costs. Over the next 20 years, Marion County will continue to keep as its top priority the maintenance and preservation of the 1,123-mile existing roadway system (929 miles paved) in terms of resource allocation. Approximately \$11.5 million per year has previously gone toward operations, maintenance, and pavement preservation. This will drop to an estimated \$9 million per year due to the anticipated yearly loss of \$2.5 million from the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, which expired in 2007.

Transportation needs identified in Marion County's Rural Transportation System Plan include \$183 million for rural projects and \$205 million for projects on county roads within urban growth boundaries of cities. Therefore, Marion County must select only its highest priority improvements, balancing projects that address mobility, safety and roadway preservation. New and sustainable funding for new transportation infrastructure (roads and bridges) and for maintaining the existing transportation system are needed. Traditional contributions through gas tax, fees and charges to developers, as required by land use conditions of approval, are not sufficient.

Marion County's urban areas cited transportation and traffic issues as their number one concern, specifically freeway access, Highway 99 and 22 improvements, the safety and viability of bridges, street improvements and traffic congestion. Fourteen of the county's 20 cities are anticipating significant growth.

To meet the demands caused by growth, cities have proposed \$100 million in transportation projects, while at the same time facing transportation funding shortfalls. Many cities are observing the growing negative effects of traffic congestion on main routes through town. As a result, some cities are proposing bypass routes and others are requesting investigation of alternative routes.

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Connectivity issues such as walking trails, sidewalks, bike paths, and pedestrian safety have been cited by several communities as issues of significant interest. Also cited was the need to continue to support bus service to Marion County communities through the Chemeketa Area Regional Transportation System, also known as the CARTS program. Freight rail traffic is expected to increase significantly, and will require significant funding increases to maintain service levels.

An efficient multi-modal transportation system, that includes countywide airports as well as rail systems, is also tied to economic development, supporting Marion County's commerce and economic prosperity. Congestion management is vital to preserving the ability of the public to access businesses and other destinations. Public safety and economic benefits of reduced congestion include reduced accident rates, the consequential damage costs and the social cost attributable to travel delays.

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HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Goal #6: Improve the delivery of quality and cost-efficient health and community services for the citizens of Marion County who require such services. Collaborate with non-profit and private providers, schools, law enforcement and families to provide an enhanced continuum of care for those needing supportive services in our community, while encouraging self-reliance and a progressively decreasing dependence on human and public safety services.

Many of the health and human services issues facing the county are due to the lack of affordable health care and effects of drug and alcohol abuse on children, families and adults. High levels of drug and alcohol use lead to an increased demand for foster care, mental health, health care, crisis, treatment and prevention services. Increases in substance use and gang activity point out the need for better access to treatment and recovery programs for teens involved with gangs or substance abuse. Increased capacity in programs and services that help keep kids out of trouble will also be needed as will a continuum of services for juvenile offenders that offer the chance of rehabilitation and keep these youth out of the corrections system.

Marion County's success in addressing public safety depends in large measure on success in dealing with health and community services issues. To be most effective, the county will need to identify the specific continuum of service that needs to be provided. Mental health and substance abuse intervention and treatment that address problems at all stages—early childhood, adolescents, at-risk youth, juvenile delinquents, adults, adult offenders, adults as parents and older adults—must be readily available.

Marion County also has high unemployment, poverty and high school dropout rates. Families struggling to provide for basic necessities such as food and shelter need support to become self-sufficient. There are limited resources for families of teenagers who are not involved in crime but are at-risk of social problems. By supporting children and youth in the context of their families--families of origin when possible and foster care families when necessary--we increase the likelihood of success.

Along with these issues there is the need to provide prevention support and intervention services that address educational failure. Preventing school failure is essential to

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preventing substance abuse, juvenile crime, teen pregnancy, welfare dependency and other lifelong problems.

Nearly every community in the county said that more affordable community-based activities are needed for children, youth, adults, and families to promote their health, wellbeing, growth and development and the wellbeing and vibrancy of the community.

Marion County has an opportunity to assess the gaps in structured youth programs outside of school, and explore intensified after-school programs as a way of addressing school failure and family structure instability. About half of the youth in K-12 public education throughout the county are free-lunch eligible—one of the highest levels in the state. Marion County can build on existing health and nutrition education programs, offered both in school and after school.

Access to affordable health care is essential to protecting the health of community members. The demand for county health care services will continue to increase, particularly as access to other public assistance programs becomes more limited. Health care services must be as effective and efficient as possible to assure maximum benefit for the available funding. Services to vulnerable individuals such as pregnant women, young children, the elderly, and those with disabilities need to be maintained and, where possible, enhanced by leveraging community resources.

Like the national trend, Marion County's population is aging. Greater demands will be placed on health care, housing, mental health and other senior services. As the aging adult population of the county increases, the county will need to ensure that a continuum of mental health and substance abuse services for older adults are available, especially for low-income and indigent seniors.

Finally, recognizing that one social problem can translate into major consequences for multiple county departments (e.g., a meth house may result in children in protective custody), it will be important for Marion County to build and foster strong interdepartmental relationships that encourage coordinated responses and problem solving.

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Goal #7: *Proactively plan a comprehensive emergency management program for all types of natural and man-made disasters that might occur in Marion County. Implement a recovery system to prevent loss of life and minimize property damage, returning the county and its communities to a normal status as soon as possible following an emergency.*

Issue Background: Natural disasters such as floods, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and droughts pose a potential threat to the life and property of Marion County's population and to the infrastructure of Marion County. The threat of natural hazards and the resulting destruction of life and property, disruption of essential services and water supply problems place a large number of Marion County's population at risk. Marion County is also subject to technological and human-caused hazards such as terrorism, fire, dam failure, transportation accidents and hazardous materials spills.

Citizens and businesses of Marion County rightly expect government organizations and structures to manage and coordinate response and recovery activities and to provide guidance and information to the general population before, during and after the emergency events. Combined with the advances in the information technology, electronic communication and e-government fields, this puts the highest-ever level of expectations on the efficiency and effectiveness of response and recovery efforts. Efforts will be made to educate and inform county residents on basic emergency preparedness. In addition, Marion County will also coordinate emergency planning drills with participating cities within the county. Where possible Marion County will include other federal, state and local jurisdictions.

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