

# Core Competencies **AND** Jail Leadership

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## What skills, knowledge, and abilities do jail leaders

need in order to be credible and successful? Beginning

with the July/August 2015 issue of *American*

*Jails*, we are exploring the 22 core competencies as identified by jail administrators across the country. Welcome to the 13th installment on core competencies and jail leadership.

In this issue of *American Jails*, we take a closer look at the core competency identified as “engage in strategic planning” and recommend several valuable resources related to leadership.



## Engage in Strategic Planning

**Description:** Proactively analyze emerging trends, anticipate organizational needs, and develop strategies for meeting them.

**Rationale:** Effective leadership, management, and accountability require short- and long-range planning and adjusting operations. This includes maintaining a comprehensive foundation of information, collecting and analyzing relevant data, and working with community stakeholders.

### Requires knowledge of:

- National, State, and local trends that may impact the jail and the local justice system.
- Resources that provide data, information, and trends that may impact the jail and the justice system.
- Relationship between the long-range trends and the jail's budget.
- Strategic planning process.

### Requires the skills to:

- Lead efforts in long-range planning.

- Forecast future trends.
- Synthesize numerous and diverse sources of information to benefit short- and long-range planning.
- Apply information and data from other jails and outside disciplines to one's own agency.
- Mentor peers and subordinates regarding their roles in strategic planning.
- Collaborate with external stakeholders.
- Gain consensus, internally and externally, for the jail's strategic plan.
- Make necessary adjustments to the plan based on feedback and environmental changes.

### Requires the ability to:

- See the "big picture" of data, trends, initiatives, and policies beyond the jail.
- Analyze emerging trends in the public and private sector.
- Read voraciously; encourage subordinates to do the same.
- Analyze, translate, and apply complex information to the jail's future.

- Visualize the jail's future.
- Assure operations align with the strategic plan.
- Recognize the plan's potential impact on stakeholders and seek partnerships.
- Think critically about the jail and the local justice system.

## Does Your Jail Know Where It Is Going?

"Failing to plan is planning to fail." Alan Lakein's insight is a reminder that many of the day-to-day operational struggles we face took root in the past, when we failed to think ahead.

In many jurisdictions, the resources available to operate our jails continue to be strained. To get the most out of what is available, it is critical that we plan and articulate the strategies we will use to set our jail's priorities and direction, and to identify the expected outcomes of these strategies. If an organization does not have a sound strategic plan with a roadmap laying out the future and pointing the organization toward its objectives, the jail is not likely to achieve its goals. In addi-

## 22 Core Competencies for Jail Leaders

- Anticipate, analyze, and resolve organizational challenges and conflicts.
- Assure organizational accountability.
- Build and maintain positive relationships with external stakeholders.
- Build and maintain teamwork; mentor and coach others.
- Communicate effectively, internally and externally.
- Comprehend, obtain, and manage fiscal resources.
- Develop and maintain a positive organizational culture that promotes respect for diverse staff.
- Develop and sustain organizational vision/mission.
- **Engage in strategic planning.**
- Enhance self-awareness; maintain proactive professional commitment.
- Establish organizational authority, roles, and responsibilities.
- Leverage the role of the jail in the criminal justice system.
- Make sound decisions.
- Manage change.
- Manage labor relations.
- Manage power and influence.
- Manage time.
- Obtain and manage human resources.
- Oversee inmate and facility management.
- Oversee physical plant management.
- Reduce jail-related liability risks.
- Understand and manage emerging technology.

tion, it can become sidelined and ineffective not only in the eyes of the community we serve, but also to the employees who look to their leaders for the vision.

This article provides an overview of strategic planning. It includes a Strategic Planning Checklist and provides links to strategic plans from jails scattered across the country. Even if you are not in a position to generate interest in developing a strategic plan for your entire organization, you are not excused from the creation of such a plan for your shift, work group, or department. Although some jails hire consultants to help develop their strategic plan, there is no reason why this work cannot be generated using the internal smarts of the organization—given proper planning and strong leadership (McC Campbell, 2016a).

How would you respond if your staff, a community group, or your funding authority asks you as a jail leader: “Where do you see this organization in five years?” More of the same, even if the “same” isn’t too great? Or are you forced to admit you don’t know? Or do you defer by saying that’s not in my pay grade? Even if the top leadership of the organization changes, there is no excuse for a lack of vision and direction.

Consider corporate America. Even when the CEO retires, or moves to another Fortune 500 company, the organization continues to manufacture cars, refrigerators, or laptops. If that continuity of vision and purpose didn’t exist, the company would fail—just as a jail will ultimately fail without the vision and planning to move confidently into the future.

### **Strategic Planning and Its Importance to Jail Leaders**

A strategic plan serves as a roadmap to operationalize the organization’s mission, vision, values, and policies. It focuses the organization’s vision on:

- Meeting the demands of public service.
- Ensuring good stewardship of public resources.
- Demanding accountability.
- Maintaining the public’s safety.

The strategic planning *process* helps to:

- Clearly identify our priorities.
- Document the needs using objective data.
- Focus us on procuring the resources necessary to accomplish these priorities.
- Identify the specific actions to get where we want to go and how the accomplishments will be measured and sustained.
- Articulate a shared vision and commitment with the staff and the community.
- Allow us to modify our plan when circumstances, or evaluation outcomes, require change.

As jail leaders seek higher performance and more accountability, we discover that we need to involve staff, as well as relevant stakeholders. Successful leaders know that mission success is accomplished through communicating objectives and goals supported by strategies and actions that clearly align with their agency’s vision. Engaging staff and stakeholders in this fundamental work gives them a personal stake in implementing the plans. People support what they help to create. Coercing staff to buy into plans—or worse yet ignoring their input—will not result in long-term success. As we begin to hold ourselves and our staff accountable for accomplishing the work, we also need to give them the tools, roadmap, and encouragement to move forward confidently (McC Campbell, 2016b).

A strategic plan helps jails in these ways:

- Establishes the shared direction. How does the organization and its stakeholders determine the facility’s future goals and mission (3–5 years)? Is this organization reactionary (as in responding to the “crisis of the day”) or deliberate in moving toward an excellent organization?
- Uses the framework of the strategic plan to make decisions.
- Defines what data is maintained and analyzed to support the plan’s elements.
- Identifies potential obstacles to achieving goals and finds strategies to overcome or mitigate the obstacles.
- Seeks, directs, and allocates resources based on the plan.
- Provides a means to engage in action planning that is flexible to ensure implementation and sustainability.

The strategic planning process is not a “one-time get it done—hire a consultant—check-off the box” project. It is a philosophy about how the jail’s operations are guided into the future, with allowance for mid-course corrections as needed. Developing the next generation of leaders requires the current executives to involve staff in the process so they can learn and are the mentors for the future. An organization’s ability to address challenges, engage staff and stakeholders, develop and deploy action plans, and improve results are all determined

by the effectiveness of its strategic planning.

### Setting the Tone for a Strategic Planning Initiative

So how can you “sell” a strategic planning process in your jail? Strategic planning can help collectively to:

- Identify and analyze the *real* problem or issue, not just the symptoms (e.g., increase in inmate violence, use of force, worker’s compensation claims, etc.).
- Clarify how problems manifest themselves by using indicators and data.
- Question why we do what we do (hopefully not because “we’ve always done it that way”).
- Envision how the jail will operate if the “problems” are solved—really solved.
- Articulate the options and opportunities to try new approaches including drilling down into the benefits and challenges of implementing alternative or new ways of completing tasks.
- Align the goals to the vision and mission of the organization (McCampbell, 2015b).
- Involve the stakeholders, partners, and collaborators.
- Measure success.
- Build on the improvements and continue to improve.

### Importance of Agency Mission, Vision, and Values

A prerequisite of strategic planning is the establishment of the organization’s mission, vision, and values (McCampbell, 2016a). Taken together—setting, updating, or refining your facility’s mission, vision and values with your strategic planning—is a BIG undertaking, especially if done with the needed involvement of staff and stakeholders. Consider these two activities as complementary and plan this work over a specified period of time (to hold yourself accountable). The daily work of the jail competes for

## Strategic Planning Checklist

### Step One: Building the Foundation

- Collaboratively develop (or update) the facility’s vision, mission, and value (VMV) statements.
- Communicate VMV statements throughout the organization and to relevant stakeholders.
- Identify an all-inclusive, collaborative group to guide the implementation process.
- Establish a schedule with benchmarks and timelines.
- Designate someone with responsibility and authority to oversee implementation.

### Step Two: Gathering and Analyzing Related Information

- Collect and analyze sources of information that will impact the ability to achieve VMV.
- Assess related strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (i.e., conduct a SWOT analysis) (Cebola & Ritter, 2013).
- Determine how policies and procedures can be better aligned with VMV.
- Analyze alternative options for moving the organization in the desired direction.

### Step Three: Developing the Action Plan

- Prioritize expected outcomes and define them in measurable terms.
- Establish periodic benchmarks and anticipated completion dates.
- Determine what changes are needed to achieve specific outcomes.
- Establish change implementation strategies and timelines.
- Assure that all relevant employee groups are represented throughout action plan development.

### Step Four: Implementing and Evaluating the Plan

- Secure requisite resources.
- Create supportive partnerships with public and private agencies.
- Designate someone to compile and report ongoing progress assessments.
- Keep all employees, partners, and stakeholders informed of progress or setbacks.
- Use both formal and informal feedback to make adjustments, modifications, or improvements.

**Source:** Excerpted with permission from Stinchcomb, J.B., & McCampbell S.W. (2014, April). *Resource guide for newly appointed warden, 2nd edition*. Washington, DC: Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections. Retrieved from [www.cipp.org/pdf/Resource%20Guide%202014.pdf](http://www.cipp.org/pdf/Resource%20Guide%202014.pdf)

## SWOT Analysis

In the strategic planning process, consider using a SWOT analysis:

- **Strengths**—elements on which to capitalize.
- **Weaknesses**—elements that need reinforcement, such as opposing agendas, loss of control, vulnerability.
- **Opportunities**—elements to invest in. This helps to address issues before they become litigation, and creates partnerships to provide educational training.
- **Threats**—elements to identify. This includes issues that could lead to potential litigation, outsiders influencing decisions, open to critiques, and exposure of weaknesses.

Strengths and weaknesses are internal elements. Opportunities and threats are normally external elements. The purpose of identifying the SWOTs is to transform weaknesses and threats into strengths and opportunities.

## Setting Goals the SMART Way: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely

Being *specific* is not as easy as it sounds. Often we understand what we want to accomplish in theory, but lack the ability to identify a clear and unmistakable target. Problems must be reduced down to their basic, individual components. This will take time, but it is essential to the process. Start by developing goals at a broad level then refining them until you narrow the focus. Eventually, your end result is a select number of specific improvement opportunities. When promoting these opportunities to your staff or stakeholders, use action verbs, such as “create,” “design,” “develop,” and “implement.”

A *measurable* goal can be even harder to develop or the jail lacks the data to establish a quantifiable objective. Question how you became aware of the issue; for example, was it because your staff were spending an inordinate amount of time handling the issue? Build in some type of measure to show if the effort was worth it.

*Attainable* goals do not rely heavily on circumstances (or people) that are outside our direct control. It is easy for staff to pick goals that are beyond their control. When there is a failure, it can then be blamed on someone else. This does not mean that jail leaders shouldn't try to influence those outside their immediate span of control.

That brings us to the goal of needing to be *realistic*. “Pie in the sky” is great, but for this process to be meaningful, goals must be something that can be attainable.

To be *timely*, a goal must be completed in the specified time frame—whether it is six months, one year, or even three years. Goals into the future are often not realistic. Goals with no targeted end date are not attainable or realistic. Specific timelines need to accompany the goal.

Adapted from Doran, G. T. (1981). “There’s a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management’s goals and objectives.” *Management Review*, 70(11), 35–36.

time with these two processes. It is the leader’s job to carve out the time to get this done—without excuses!

## Overcoming Your Jail’s History

When the vision and mission of the organization are established or updated, conduct an analysis of current operations. Based on the mission, vision and values, ask the question “Where are we now?” It is important to conduct this review to know how close—or far away—the organization is to its vision. This process also serves to identify what is working and what is not working. Too often jails are stuck in the past, captured by history, doing things “because we’ve always done them that way,” and fearful of change and the future. The fear of change is a major motivator (Cebula & Ritter, 2013). The strategic planning process can address this, because failing to address “change phobia” will doom the organization’s future (McCampbell, 2015a). The Strategic Planning Checklist in the sidebar provides four steps to help organizations strategize their planning.

## Action Planning

As noted above, a critical feature of strategic planning is how we get to the desired end through action planning. Converting goals into attainable work activities is where organizations often fail—by not being precise, not having measurable accomplishments, not assigning the work to specific staff, and not having realistic or manageable timelines. If there is no accountability for these action plans, then why even bother? (See sidebar titled “SMART Goal Setting.”)

There are many formats for action planning. (Check the internet resources listed in the Leadership Library on page 45 and pick the one that your team thinks works best for you.) For example, the strategic plan goal may be to create a safer environment for both inmates and staff. The essential elements of such a goal may include:

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- Objective, measurable statement of the work to be accomplished (e.g., inmate/inmate assaults will be reduced by 20% by January 1, 2018).
- Current status (e.g., inmate/inmate violence has increased 10% in the last year).
- Identification of how the progress will be measured (e.g., incident reports, inmate trips to medical, worker’s compensation claims for staff breaking up fights, facility damage, litigation).
- Person assigned to this work (e.g., Lt. Jones assisted by Sgt. Smith).
- Due dates for interim work (e.g., analysis of current inmate/inmate violence by September 15th, examination of current policies, procedures, classification process, and training by October 15th, etc.).
- Implementation strategies and priorities.
- Final report to be presented to the leadership team by a certain date.

Completing this report is not enough; next comes implementation with timelines for revised lesson plans, updates to the classification system, or whatever other elements were identified as contributing to the problem.

Putting the strategic plan on the shelf or allowing barriers to its implementation undermines the entire strategic planning process credibility—and your credibility as a leader. People will know if their work and contributions are important to the organization’s future. It is of great importance to communicate the strategic plan to staff, stakeholders, and the public. They need to know where the organization is heading and how it plans to get there. Helping to build an organization that is not fearful of change is also derailed if initiatives such as strategic planning and action planning were done just for “show.”

### Did It Work?

Organizations cannot manage or change what they don’t measure.

Data is critically important to identifying whether the organization was successful in achieving its goals and the strategic plan. Statistics enables us to make intelligent inferences from data. Proper data collection and utilizing credible benchmarks not only provide an organizational “snap shot”—a look at the organization at a specific point in time—but also assist organizations in identifying institutional and systemic problems. The word “credible” should be kept in mind when thinking about data and measuring the outcomes to identify successes and failures. If it fails, it may need to be dumped or certainly modified. Clinging to ineffective policies, procedures, or processes does not define a credible organization.

### Not Just a “One-Time” Event

Updating and tweaking the strategic plan is essential. Plans must evolve or else they become an obituary for the organization! As part of achieving the goals of the strategic plan, it must always be subject to revision and updating. As the leadership team makes decisions, two questions should always be asked:

- How does this fit within our mission, vision, and values?
- How does this fit within our strategic plan?

Decisions must align with the mission, vision, and values. If not, there is a potentially destructive disconnect that results in the jail not moving forward—and perhaps sliding backwards.

### The Next Steps

Strategic planning is critical to the organization’s future. Examine the potential for improvements that will result from initiating the processes described above. Establish or update the jail’s vision, mission and values. Talk about the future status of the

## Resources for Your Leadership Library

### APEX Resources Directory Vol. 1: Change Management and the APEX Domains

Nancy Cebula and Elizabeth Ritter, Editors (2013, September)  
U. S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections  
<https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.nicic.gov/Library/025302.pdf>

### Strategic Planning for Dummies

Erica Olsen (2007)  
Wiley Publishing Company.

### The Future Is Now: Recruiting, Retaining, and Developing the 21st Century Jail Workforce

Jeanne B. Stinchcomb, Susan W. McCampbell, and Leslie Leip (2009)  
Center for Innovative Public Policies, Inc.  
[www.cipp.org/pdf/Developingthe21stCenturyJailWorkforce05302011.pdf](http://www.cipp.org/pdf/Developingthe21stCenturyJailWorkforce05302011.pdf)

### Resource Guide for Newly Appointed Warden, Second Edition

Jeanne B. Stinchcomb and Susan W. McCampbell (2014, April)  
Center for Innovative Public Policies, Inc.  
[www.cipp.org/pdf/Resource%20Guide%202014.pdf](http://www.cipp.org/pdf/Resource%20Guide%202014.pdf)

### Examples of Strategic Plans

#### Allegheny County Jail, Pennsylvania

[www.alleghenycountyanalytics.us/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Allegheny-County-Jail-Collaborative-2016-2019-Strategic-Plan.pdf](http://www.alleghenycountyanalytics.us/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Allegheny-County-Jail-Collaborative-2016-2019-Strategic-Plan.pdf)

#### Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, Florida

[www.ccsso.org/AboutUs/PDF/StrategicPlan.pdf](http://www.ccsso.org/AboutUs/PDF/StrategicPlan.pdf)

#### Cochise County Sheriff's Office, Arizona

[www.cochise.az.gov/sites/default/files/sheriff/Sheriff\\_Office\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_2014.pdf](http://www.cochise.az.gov/sites/default/files/sheriff/Sheriff_Office_Strategic_Plan_2014.pdf)

#### Collier County Sheriff's Office, Florida

[www.colliersheriff.org/home/showdocument?id=27905](http://www.colliersheriff.org/home/showdocument?id=27905)

#### Kitsap County Sheriff's Office, Washington

[www.kitsapgov.com/sheriff/mediareleases/2017/Strategic%20Plan%202017%20-%202022.pdf](http://www.kitsapgov.com/sheriff/mediareleases/2017/Strategic%20Plan%202017%20-%202022.pdf)

#### Polk County Sheriff's Office, Florida

[www.polksheriff.org/FAQsFigures/Downloadable%20Files/2014-2015%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf](http://www.polksheriff.org/FAQsFigures/Downloadable%20Files/2014-2015%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf)

#### Washington County, Oregon, Sheriff's Office

[www.co.washington.or.us/sheriff/yoursheriff/upload/so-2011-2014-strategic-plan.pdf](http://www.co.washington.or.us/sheriff/yoursheriff/upload/so-2011-2014-strategic-plan.pdf)

jail with the staff and stakeholders. Don't overcommit to this change process if you don't have the motivation to see it completed; otherwise you will damage the organization. Carve out the time to move into the future. If the jail leader doesn't set the tone for the future, it is likely that someone outside of the organization will—and that will not be a pleasing outcome for the jail. ■

### References

- Cebula, N., & Ritter, E. (Eds.). (2013, September). *APEX resources directory vol. 1: Change management and the APEX domains*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections. Retrieved from <https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.nicic.gov/Library/025302.pdf>
- McCampbell, S.W. (2015a, September/October). Core competencies and jail leadership: "Manage change." *American Jails*, 29(4), 37–44.
- McCampbell, S.W. (2015b, November/December). Core competencies and jail leadership: "Build and maintain positive relationships with external stakeholders." *American Jails*, 29(5), 55–62.
- McCampbell, S.W. (2016a, March/April). Core competencies and jail leadership: "Develop and sustain organizational vision/mission." *American Jails*, 30(1), 37–44.
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