

Williamson County

2023 - 2033 Strategic Plan Overview

Williamson County 2023-2033 Strategic Plan

In 2022, Williamson County embarked on a comprehensive long range strategic planning process to assess current efforts and status, build upon successes and partnerships, continue momentum in positive growth and services, and to solidify a united path to further accomplishments and a vision for the future. The deliverables included a full Strategic Plan document with a Vision, Mission, Values, Strategic Priorities, Key Goals, Outcomes and SMART Objectives; an Implementation Plan and strategic planning templates for ongoing work.

This final report is a summary of the work completed through the process, the results and basic components of the strategic plan, and recommendations for future work and successful implementation.

Summary of Strategic Planning

A well-designed Strategic Plan answers four key questions:



Where are we NOW?

Where are we GOING?

HOW will we get there?

How will we KNOW?

Over the course of an eight (8) month process, SBrand Solutions worked with Williamson County Commissioners, elected officials, appointed department heads, staff, and key partners to ask those same questions, collect the answers, and

use that feedback to help craft draft and final documents. This strategic plan was designed as a living document that should be updated regularly to reflect changes that happen over time and to measure progress.

Process and Approach

With the knowledge that this Strategic Plan will be a living document that will serve as a guide to the future as well as a road map with milestones, a thoughtful and deliberate methodology was designed to create the final strategic plan. The process was based around 4-phases:

- **Phase 1 – Process Design**
- **Phase 2 – Engagement and Outreach, Research and Analysis**
- **Phase 3 – Strategic Plan Meetings**
- **Phase 4 – Plan Creation**

Phase 1 – Process Design was started in September of 2022. This initial step involved significant conversations and meetings as the County established the preferred process, set the overall schedule, identified groups and individuals, established roles for the plan, created questions for engagement and outreach, and designed the overall project from start to finish.

Phase 2 – Engagement and Outreach, Research and Analysis began in October and continued throughout the life of the project. The main components included review of all current County documents that might relate to strategic planning including previous strategic planning, master plans, budgets, and other information. A staff survey, a partner survey and an elected official survey was conducted, seventeen focus groups were held with internal elected and appointed officials, and forty interviews were conducted including with partners and community stakeholders. The feedback and information in those surveys, focus groups and interviews was analyzed and reviewed for common themes that would help set the stage for Phase 3.

Phase 3 – Strategic Plan Meetings While there were weekly meetings over the course of the project, there were also specific meetings to discuss the strategic plan process and documents. The core strategic planning retreat took place during January of 2023 over the course of a full day and involved all of the elected officials and appointed department head in Williamson County. Following that retreat, a series of subject matter expert meetings for each Key Goal Area were facilitated to create the implementation plan. The Commissioners also held several meetings to discuss the plan and give guidance and direction, and the core team met multiple times to give feedback and guidance on the process and content of the plan. Those Key Goal Area teams continued to meet and refine Strategic Goals, SMART Objectives and Action Steps to be included in the Strategic Plan and/or the Implementation Plan.

Phase 4 – Plan Creation was the culmination of all of the work in Phases 1 – 3, using the content and context created by the feedback and the retreat and crafting a Strategic Plan document as well as the internally focused Implementation Plan. This Strategic Plan document tells the story of the County and can be used in print, on the website, and as a communication tool on social media and other platforms.

Strategic Plan Framework



The above graphic is an easy-to-understand overview of the Strategic Plan framework. The **Vision Statement** is the aspirational future for the County and is the achievement of all of the challenging work in the strategic planning process. The **Mission Statement** is the purpose of the County and provides guidance for each of the components. The **Strategic Priorities** are listed in order and are the most critical areas for the County to spend time and resources to achieve success and realize the Vision for the future, and the **Key Goals** are the major areas that integrate across those Strategic Priorities to provide direction.

Strategic Priorities

During the process, there were six Strategic Priorities that were discussed and defined – these are the most important areas for the County to focus resources and time to accomplish outcomes that are positive and lead to the future. Each Strategic Priority has specific Outcomes

that will be accomplished over time, Key Goals to focus the work, and SMART Objectives to guide the staff for allocation of time and resources. Each Strategic Priority has a description and outcomes listed in the Strategic Plan to offer more context and information.

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan is the tactical, operational, and administrative document that will guide the accomplishment of Action Steps, SMART Objectives and Key Goals. In short, it takes the overall policy direction from the Commissioners and puts actions to those words. Always following the Mission to gauge the right approach, an Implementation Plan adds context and detail to the big picture. It is an internal document which is consistently being added to, updated, and improved each time a team meets, so it is a separate document and not a part of the Strategic Plan.

With that context and detail comes focus and accountability. A good Implementation Plan will chart out a course of action steps that answer:

- 1) What will be done specifically?
- 2) Who will do that work?
- 3) By when will it be done?
- 4) What resources are needed to be successful?
- 5) What is our measurement of success?
- 6) What is the status of completion?

As with the Strategic Plan, a thorough and complete Implementation Plan might take several years to build out in detail, and with the existing work already completed, to continue to “fill in the blanks” moving forward. With practice and a commitment to making the document a true guide and a living road map, the Implementation Plan can serve as an effortless way for the Commissioners to get updates and reports on progress.

Next Steps

Monitoring and Measuring Progress

An important part of the implementation of the Strategic Plan is the monitoring and measuring of progress. Over the course of several years, as the plan continues to improve and become a part of the culture of the County, the Outcomes will be further refined, and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) will be created to provide analytical insight into the measurement of achieving those Outcomes.

While those KPI's are being crafted and evaluated, the most important next steps include:

- 1) Establishing regular meetings within each Key Goal to discuss successes, lessons learned and upcoming SMART Objectives;

- 2) Creating quarterly Commissioner updates on the progress of the plan; celebrating successes and accomplishments, sharing lessons learned, and getting feedback and direction from the Commissioners for the coming quarter; and
- 3) Setting an annual Commissioner retreat as part of the budget planning process to review the Strategic Plan and set new Goals and SMART Objectives for the coming year as needed.

Integration of the Strategic Plan

The budget is the Strategic Plan with resources attached. As such, during each budget cycle the strategic plan should be considered, discussed, amended, and improved to make sure the budget reflects the priorities of the County. In addition, all the Master Plans should be reviewed for integration into the Strategic Plan (or adapting the Strategic Plan based on the information in those Master Plans).

Recommendations

At SBrand, we value the plans you create and consider these plans to be living documents, not something that just sits on the shelf. This is a significant investment for the team, and is the strategic framework that will guide operations, goals, budgeting, and communication for the next several years. In order to get the most out of significant work the County has done, we recommend the following:

Publish the Strategic Plan to Tell Your Story You have an amazing, content rich and easy to read Strategic Plan that tells the story of the history, current status and future of the County! We recommend crafting a press release to share the plan, publishing that plan online, printing hard copies as needed, sharing the plan via social media, and establishing a page or location on your website for your community to follow your progress.

Process to update the Implementation/Work Plan Implementing the action steps for the key areas of focus is essential for success of the plan and manifest the vision and guide the mission. Our fundamental recommendation for the continuance of the plan is for ongoing meetings to update SMART Objectives, create Action Steps, and consider Key Performance Measures. The existing work has already created a thoughtful and deliberate approach to strategic implementation and staff assignments. This process ensures that the initial steps are taken for implementation, along with fostering champions of the plan and overall strategic vision among staff and community members.

Core Value Definition and Guiding Principle Statement The Values of the County are critically important to creating a workplace culture, telling the story of the County, and ensuring that the standards are being upheld in all areas. We recommend taking those Values words, building strong definitions, and creating a statement that will be a Guiding Principle for each Value.

Creation of Key Performance Indicators (Measurable) How do you know the plan is working? How do you know that your goals are being accomplished and your vision is on its way to realization? Creating Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) helps in providing tangible benchmarks for accomplishments. This not only allows staff to know they are on the right track, but also provides accountability for all involved stakeholders in the overall implementation of the plan.

Creation of a Forward-Facing Dashboard How would the County communicate the most important work being done with the Strategic Plan? How will you distill all the information into a manageable and easy to communicate platform to tell the story around what is most important? Having a forward-facing dashboard is a great means by which all involved in the plan, from the staff working through projects and goals, to the community who has a decidedly profound stake in the future, having a dashboard that quickly and clearly shows the plan, the goals, and the progress is an essential tool.

Quarterly Commissioner Reports/Update Meetings Consider these a deep check in on the progress of the goals and objectives as reported by the staff. Quarterly meetings outline status updates, produce tangible actions steps with measurable results and outcome, and are also forums for the staff, and the Commissioners to celebrate success of the implementation of the plan, which in turn creates momentum for meeting and accomplishing its goals. This is especially important in continuing the work to set initial action steps for implementation.

Facilitated Annual Retreat with the Commissioners If the past few years are an example, the world both inside and outside Williamson County can change. How does this impact the implementation of your Key Goals? What about the establishment of new Goals, or new Priorities? This is where an annual retreat to revisit the strategic plan is key. An annual retreat focused on a deep dive into the plan and the status of meeting the goals can keep the tenets of the plan fresh in the minds of Commissioners, elected and appointed officials, and staff; and ensure a positive return on your strategic plan investment.

Summary and Thank You

We want to thank the Williamson County Commissioners, the elected officials, the appointed department heads, and the dedicated staff with whom we were able to interact and collaborate. The strengths and opportunities within the County are tremendous, and your future is bright! This comprehensive Strategic Plan will be a cornerstone for County government and a guiding document for the foreseeable future. By ensuring the plan is a living document, it will become a part of the culture of the government and be a road map for your strategic journey.