

Department of Community Services

Strategic Plan

FY 2026 - FY 2028

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Letter from the Director

I am pleased to present the Department of Community Services (DCS) Strategic Plan, a critical roadmap that will guide our work over the next three years. This concise and accessible document is designed to focus our collective energy, built upon the foundation of the DCS Mission, Vision, and Values. As a living document, it will help us strengthen our impact as we evolve. This plan is intentionally aligned with the Multnomah County Strategic Plan, positioning our departmental efforts within the County's broader focus areas and defining the major goals and priorities that will advance the vital work already underway across our divisions.

This plan belongs to all of us in DCS as it was built through a collective effort from the ground up through deep and thoughtful staff engagement. The insights from every level of the department, gathered in the spirit of the 3 Cs — collaboration, communication, and celebration — are a bridge connecting community needs to our services and creating a sense of shared ownership for our future. Furthermore, this plan has equity built into its very fabric, ensuring we remain grounded in serving our community while aligning our internal culture-building efforts with the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP).

As a leader, I am profoundly grateful for the hard work, dedication, and expertise you bring to DCS every single day. This Strategic Plan is a direct reflection of your commitment to excellence and passion for public service. By focusing on these shared priorities, we are better positioned to deliver stable, equitable, and innovative infrastructure that Multnomah County relies on. I look forward to working alongside each of you as we bring this vision to life, collectively building a department that we can all be proud of. Thank you for your partnership and for the vital role you serve in making our community a better place for everyone.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margi Bradway". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Margi Bradway

Director, Department of Community Services

Who We Are

Multnomah County is the smallest yet most populous county in Oregon, serving as a vital hub for over 800,000 residents. Named after the Multnomah people of the Chinookan nation, the county spans 465 square miles, encompassing the vibrant urban center of Portland, the pastoral landscapes of Sauvie Island, and the rugged beauty of the Columbia River Gorge.

The **Department of Community Services (DCS)** acts as the bridge between our landscape and the people who inhabit it. DCS comprises our Director's Office and four key divisions, each of which serves a unique and vital role in supporting our community.

The DCS Director's Office encompasses Business Services, Asset Management, Equity and Safety Programs, oversees department-wide strategic initiatives, and supports our four major divisions:



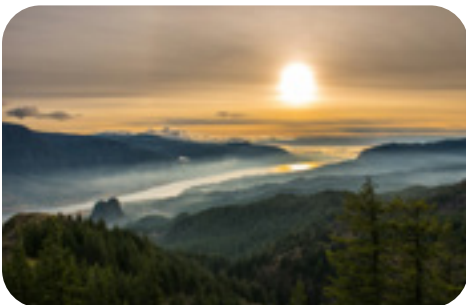
Animal Services

Multnomah County Animal Services (MCAS) protects the health, safety, and welfare of people and pets throughout Multnomah County.



Elections

Elections conducts all local, city, county, state, and federal elections for the voters of Multnomah County.



Land Use Planning

Land Use Planning ensures the preservation and protection of forest lands, farm and nursery production, wildlife, streams, scenic views, and the Columbia River Gorge.



Transportation

Transportation oversees roads, bridges, planning, permits, and the County Surveyor's office.



Visit the DCS website for an in-depth look at the work being done across our four divisions.

multco.us/dcs

Our Mission, Vision, and Values



Mission

The Department of Community Services preserves harmony between natural and built environments, keeps people and pets safe, and ensures every voice is heard.



Vision

The vision of DCS is to be a trusted partner helping to create thriving and inclusive communities.



Values

Responsibility: We are resourceful, and explore ways to deliver safe, responsive, effective, and sustainable services.

Integrity: We act with honesty, sincerity, and high ethical standards.

Transparency: We promote an open process and communicate the reasons for actions and decisions.

Equity: We respect, value, and honor diversity as we build relationships with our colleagues and communities.

Leadership: We encourage innovation and promote professional growth.



How We Do Our Work

Communication: Communicate transparently across our teams and with the public.

Collaboration: Work together to achieve a common goal by pooling our strengths and insights.

Celebration: Celebrate our progress and celebrate each other.

Customer Service: Continuously improve our customer service to best meet the community's needs.



Our Commitment to Equity

DCS strives to maintain our commitment to promoting safety, trust, belonging, and equitable decision-making internally and externally. The DCS Equity Program provides training and resources, policy evaluation, and leadership support, and aligns with the Multnomah County Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP).

Guided by the Multnomah County Strategic Plan

The Multnomah County FY 2026 – FY 2028 Strategic Plan is a three-year roadmap designed to align county operations with a mission of equity, resilience, and accountability.

County Focus Area	Description	Examples of how DCS Contributes
Focus Area 1: Support Community Health and Wellness	This Focus Area is about being a trusted and reliable source of information and providing community-centered safety net services, especially those most impacted by inequities.	MCAS cares for the animals in Multnomah County, and its Field Services programs protect the public from potentially dangerous animals. The MCAS Community Advisory Committee guides its work and builds community trust in its initiatives.
Focus Area 2: Create a Safe and Just Community	Our goal is to support individuals impacted by crime, including survivors and those in the justice system, and to create safer communities for everyone.	MCAS helps create safer neighborhoods in Multnomah County by ensuring effective management and timely resolution of animal-related community complaints. MCAS promotes positive animal outcomes by tracking adoptions, return-to-owner policies, and hand-offs to other agencies as necessary. Adoptions will continue to be supported by spay or neuter services.
Focus Area 3: Strengthen Community Vitality and Resilience	This Focus Area is about building our capacity to prepare and respond to crises, strengthening diverse partnerships, and building a thriving local economy.	DCS builds capacity to prepare for and respond to crises by strengthening Transportation infrastructure for resiliency. We strive to provide quality services and innovative solutions in engineering, maintaining and operating our bridges, and we ensure access to the traveling public on our roads. We support a thriving local economy through our Land Use Planning Program. We continue to align our land use decisions and the land use code with the County Chair's goals for affordable housing, economic stability, and climate resiliency with the goal of promoting a healthy and prosperous community for all.



Visit Multnomah County's website for more information about Multnomah County's FY 2026 - FY 2028 Strategic Plan.

multco.us/info/multnomah-countys-strategic-plan

County Focus Area	Description	Examples of how DCS Contributes
Focus Area 4: Be Accountable, Collaborative, and Transparent:	We are committed to making transparent, data-driven decisions and fostering better collaboration both internally and with the community.	In DCS, we commit to transparent, data-driven decisions to foster trust of the general public. The Elections Office upholds these values every day in the work that we do to administer fair and accessible elections for the voters of Multnomah County. We strive to provide timely information to the public in all aspects of the work and provide information, translation, and aid to hard-to-reach and disabled voters.
Focus Area 5: Improve Operational Excellence	This Focus Area is all about our workforce. We want to ensure employees feel connected to our mission, are proud of their work, and embrace a culture of continuous improvement.	DCS Director's Office strives for Operational Excellence, embracing a culture of continuous improvement. We lead department-wide training and coaching for managers to improve department-wide processes. DCS Director's Office acts as a liaison to the Board of Multnomah County Commissioners on the County legislative process. We ground our work in equity and inclusion from development to implementation of all our operations, policies, programs, and projects. DCS strives to provide the best customer service to the public, whether it's issuing a land use permit or helping a voter understand an election.
Focus Area 6: Invest in Our Future	This Focus Area concentrates on creating a coordinated, equitable, and effective system for youth and families.	DCS invests in our future by prioritizing the Safe Routes to School program, ensuring our youngest residents have secure and accessible pathways to their education. We further this mission by actively engaging our youth in planning vital capital projects, including the 223rd Avenue Safe Routes to School and 257th Avenue Safety Improvements projects. By integrating student perspectives, we are building infrastructure that reflects the input and needs of the next generation. DCS fosters the next wave of public service leaders through our College to County Internship program. Every summer, we hire multiple interns across all divisions, bridging academic study and meaningful professional experience.



A County Elections worker executes the standardized processing of mail-in and provisional ballots at the Duniway Lovejoy Elections Building. This methodical approach to ballot handling is essential to meeting statutory deadlines while upholding the highest standards of electoral precision.

Approach

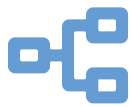
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A Participatory Process
Aligning Our Work

A Participatory Process

Defining Our Goals

Representatives across DCS were engaged throughout the Strategic Plan development process. Our work began in Fall 2025 by identifying the most essential work DCS must do to fulfill our mission within a three-year planning horizon. With teams from across DCS, we generated four primary goals to guide DCS's implementation of that essential work:



Improve Systems & Processes



Center Our Community



Strengthen How We Work



Secure Our Future

Hearing from Staff

Facilitated workshops were held for each division and the Director's Office to review plan drafts at key points in its development. DCS staff worked in groups to determine their unique contributions to the goals and refine the emerging priorities and actions under each goal. In addition, an all-staff survey was administered to validate that the goals accurately reflected the important work of the department, and to collect feedback on how the goals should be implemented. The survey was open to all DCS staff from December 9, 2025 to January 6, 2026 and garnered a 36% response rate, with 76 participants across all divisions.

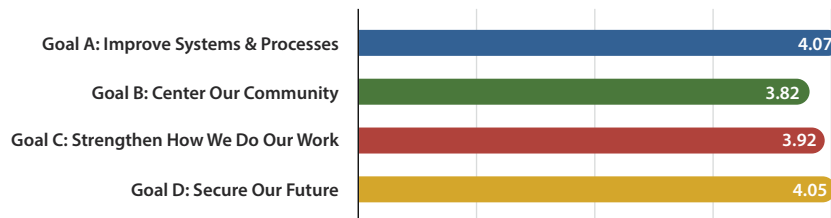


Figure 01

Survey result: How excited are you to contribute to each of the goals? On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is "Not at all" and 5 is "Highly excited."

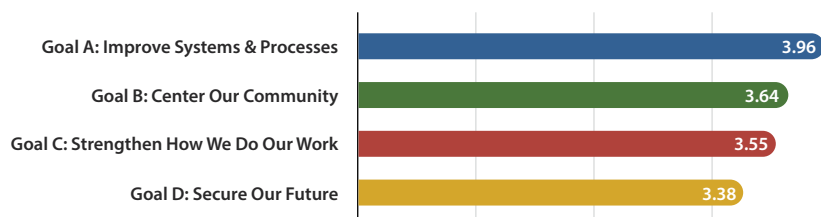


Figure 02

Survey result: To what extent is your current work reflected in each goal? On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is "Not at all reflected" and 5 is "Highly reflected."

Aligning Our Work

Equity-Focused Review and WESP Integration

The DCS Equity & Inclusion Manager and Equity Committee provided input and feedback at multiple stages of plan development. This team identified how DCS’s commitment to equity could be embedded, strengthened, and actualized throughout the plan. The DCS Strategic Plan articulates how the department will address workplace culture concerns through aligning with initiatives outlined in the 2019 and 2024 renewal of the Multnomah County Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP). This includes a focus on several key areas outlined below.



Visit Multnomah County’s website to learn more about the WESP, including the Plan and annual report.

multco.us/programs/safety-trust-and-belonging-workforce-equity-initiative

WESP (2019)

- Focus Area 1: Organizational Culture
- Focus Area 2: Promotion & Professional Development
- Focus Area 3: Retention
- Focus Area 4: Recruitment & Workforce Pipelines

WESP Renewal (2024)

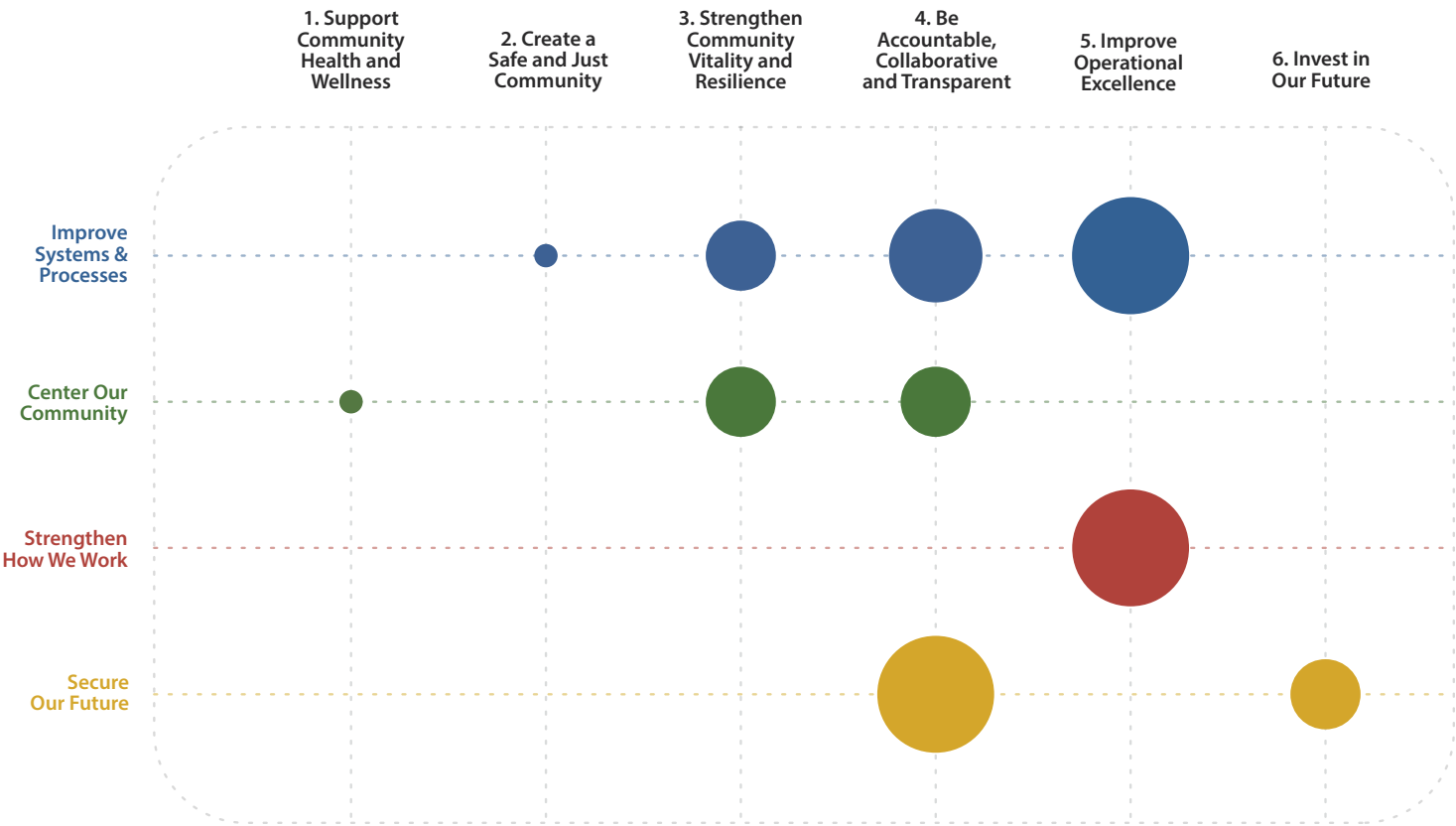
- Initiative 1: Accountability
- Initiative 3: Retention
- Initiative 4: Training
- Initiative 5: Data
- Initiative 6: Evaluation & Policy

Integration with the Multnomah County Strategic Plan

The DCS Strategic Plan was developed concurrently with the FY 2026 - FY 2028 Multnomah County Strategic Plan. Within the DCS Strategic Plan, we indicate alignment between our goals and the County’s focus areas.

Figure 03 Below

Table indicating goals and priorities of the DCS Strategic Plan (Left) that align with focus areas from the County Strategic Plan (Top). The larger the bubble, the more overlap a goal has with a given focus area.



Goals

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Goal Summary

Goal A: Improve Systems & Processes

Goal B: Center Our Community

Goal C: Strengthen How We Work

Goal D: Secure Our Future

Goal Summary

Goal A: Improve Systems & Processes

Strengthening our systems and processes reinforces the foundation of our work. We make sure codes, policies, safety practices, data management, decision making, and infrastructure support the needs of our community and workforce.

Goal B: Center Our Community

Developing trusting relationships and partnerships helps us understand and respond to community needs. We nurture a culture of being in service to our community and empower them with access to resources and information.

Goal C: Strengthen How We Work

We build and nurture a diverse team of employees that thrive in an equity-driven culture. Together, we support continuous improvement, accountability, and professional development in a culture that emphasizes communication, collaboration, and celebration.

Goal D: Secure Our Future

To meet the evolving needs of our community, we strive for financial stability and thoughtful stewardship of our resources. Through strategic funding and long-term planning, we are building a resilient foundation for tomorrow's work.



Specific Priorities and Actions throughout the DCS Strategic Plan are closely aligned with the Multnomah County Strategic Plan Focus Areas and the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan. Please use the key below to identify points of alignment.

Alignment Key

Workforce Equity Strategic Plan

WESP

County Focus Area

Focus Area



Goal A **Improve Systems & Processes**

Priorities

Alignment

1. Ensure county code, regulations, and operational policies are current, effective, legally compliant, and simplified where appropriate.

Focus Areas 2,5

- Strive to update all departmental code, regulations, and operational policies based on statutory regulation, including but not limited to:
 - Transportation: Update design manual, right of way administrative rules, and other operational policies to reflect current law and best practices.
 - Land Use: Complete the update to the County's land use code, known as the Zoning Code Project, in 2027.
 - Animal Services: Revise and update Chapter 13 county code to reflect best practices in the animal welfare community.
 - Elections: Update county code and administrative rules to reflect best practices in Rank Choice Voting.
- Endeavor to review all departmental rules and operational policies on an annual or bi-annual basis and update regularly to ensure they meet desired outcomes, are consistent across divisions, and reflect evolving industry best practices and legislative changes.
- Complete updates to the Americans with Disabilities Act and Title VI plans, ensuring equitable access to service delivery organization-wide.
- Implement standardized systems for documentation to enhance transparency, efficiency, continuous improvement, and effective staff transition across all functions.

WESP

2. Prioritize safety and emergency response.

Focus Areas 4,5

- Strengthen staff safety programs, processes, and trainings with a focus on emergency preparedness.
- Invest in disaster and emergency response planning and preparedness with clear training, documented protocols, roles, and responsibilities.
- Strengthen our ability to maintain operations during emergencies and disruptions.
- Ensure safe and secure public and staff access to all work locations.

3. Improve DCS's ability to use data and make strategic decisions.

Focus Area 4

- Embed equity in decision-making process using the equity empowerment lens, including budget decisions.
- Enhance data and information brought to the Board of County Commissioners to better inform and provide transparency to decision makers.
- Build capacity to collect, maintain, access, utilize, and report on data that meaningfully informs projects and decisions.
- Develop a departmental dashboard to track division program offers and output measures.

WESP

WESP

WESP

Priorities

4. Optimize administrative and technological infrastructure and processes for maximum efficiency and enhanced cross-divisional performance.

- a. Optimize and/or standardize administrative processes such as DCS annual budgeting, e-signature adoption, invoicing, IT purchasing, translation and interpretation, and workflow documentation.
- b. Ensure efficient, integrated technology systems are maintained, configured, and/or updated to support operational effectiveness, service delivery, and reporting needs.
- c. Improve processes to cross-train and plan for back-up staffing when needed, particularly across frontline positions.
- d. Acknowledge and emphasize the vital role that administrative staff play in optimizing technology and processes across divisions.

Alignment

Focus Area 4



Goal B **Center Our Community**

Priorities

1. Foster a culture of being in service to the communities DCS serves by enhancing customer service and removing barriers to accessing services.

- Empower employees with the knowledge, training, and resources to provide exemplary customer service and build trust with community members.
- Improve timely responses to public inquiries, with a goal of responding to customer inquiries within five business days.
- Streamline permit review processes and reduce wait times.
- Prioritize digital, physical, and language accessibility to ensure all community members have easy access to information and services. Adhere to standards like the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines to include individuals with varying abilities and offer multilingual support across websites, apps, and communication channels.
- Develop fee waivers based on criteria for situations in which a fee would cause hardship.

2. Develop and strengthen partnerships and community relationships.

- Proactively engage with community groups, partner organizations, partner agencies, government entities, volunteers, and other interest holders to cultivate enduring, high-trust relationships that are sustained through staff transition.
- Collaborate with partners to amplify outreach efforts and reach audiences that may not typically engage with government channels.
- Strengthen systems to facilitate more effective volunteer recruitment and training, treating volunteers and partners as essential co-creators of service delivery.
- Reduce barriers for minority-owned, women-owned, or small businesses in procurement processes for contracted work.

Alignment

Focus Area 4

WESP

WESP

Focus Area 3

Priorities

Alignment

3. Invest in public engagement designed to inform decision-making and shape project outcomes at all phases of work.

Focus Areas 1,3

- a. Establish and actively facilitate community advisory committees and commissions across all key operational areas. These standing committees, intentionally composed of diverse interest holders, provide advice and strategic direction, ensuring the organization's work reflects the lived experiences of the community.
- b. Create equitable pathways and remove barriers to participate in public engagement activities, for example:
 - Engage community members early and over time, with multiple engagement times and formats.
 - Continue to fund stipends for citizen committees and explore other possibilities to fund stipends for engagement in committees or similar activities.
 - Onboard volunteers with sufficient background and context so all can contribute.
 - Ensure language accessibility.
- c. Develop and resource division-specific public engagement plans and strategies that:
 - Establish clear and standard processes for public engagement and systems to access and use data across project types.
 - Identify target audiences.
 - Include staff training experiences and materials.
 - Align with countywide efforts to standardize process and measure impact.
 - Leverage natural opportunities to collect input such as collecting customer feedback and event-based engagement.

4. Communicate DCS's story and impact effectively.

Focus Area 4

- a. Create a clear narrative linking department and county Strategic Plans, and showcasing how equity is central to the work.
- b. Empower staff at all levels to communicate our story and promote our successes.
- c. Facilitate more in-person outreach to communities (e.g. community celebrations, staffing information booths and pop-ups at events across DCS divisions and county departments).
- d. Establish clear and consistent communications processes for projects and programs as appropriate.
- e. Collect and use feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of communications.

5. Foster an engaged and empowered community.

Focus Area 3

- a. Promote government transparency, for example:
 - Build a web-based dashboard to share progress and data on performance measures, projects, Strategic Plan goals, and service outcomes.
 - Increase visibility around complex decisions, such as building a searchable database of land-use decisions.
 - Proactively share information and data with the community (e.g. within community engagement, committee presentations, and roadshows).
- b. Look to expand, collaborate, or partner in public education about DCS services, either online or in-person.

Goal C **Strengthen How We Work**

Priorities

Alignment

1. Nurture an intentional equity-driven culture grounded in DCS’s mission, vision, and values where staff learn, improve, collaborate, and celebrate with each other.

Focus Area 5

- a. Create safe and clear channels for communication of concerns, challenges, and manager feedback.
- b. Reinforce a culture of continuous improvement and growth at all levels by welcoming feedback and learning from mistakes.
- c. Determine clear metrics and coordinate meaningful data collection (quantitative and qualitative) from employees to understand, suggest, and implement improvements to the workplace experience.
- d. Prioritize employee well-being, morale, and work/life balance through equitable policies, supportive resources, and consistent, visible leadership actions.
- e. Enhance collaboration by developing trusting relationships that celebrate individual and team strengths and increase opportunities to work across teams and divisions.
- f. Offer specific opportunities to celebrate and recognize employees and teams to demonstrate how contributions are continuously valued.
- g. Leverage Equity Committee guidance to put departmental equity goals into practice.

WESP

WESP

WESP

WESP

2. Enhance leadership, growth, and development opportunities for employees.

Focus Area 5

- a. Offer resources, time, and support for regular training, growth experiences, and skill-building, including a focus on:
 - Leadership skill development
 - Equity policies and practices
 - Understanding DCS as a whole
 - Rationale for and guidance to implement processes and best practices
 - Legal compliance
 - Special project opportunities
 - Cross-functional engagement
 - Cultural humility
 - Management and strengthening teams
- b. Build on the DCS onboarding mentorship program to provide other opportunities and resources for mentorship.
- c. Provide managers and staff clear, measurable expectations and provide ongoing feedback (e.g. strengthening manager and employee regular check-ins).
- d. Managers clarify and support individual pathways for career development and growth.
- e. Enhance annual employee evaluation process and “stay” interviews.

WESP

WESP

WESP

WESP

WESP

Priorities

3. Strengthen talent acquisition and employee onboarding.

- a. Follow best practices to enhance diversity in hiring, for example:
 - Create easy to understand job descriptions and announcements.
 - Broaden recruitment channels.
 - Reduce unconscious bias in the hiring process.
 - Create a welcoming and inclusive interview process.
- b. Advocate for competitive compensation to attract and retain employees.
- c. Work with Multnomah County Central Human Resources to efficiently fill vacancies and support DCS goals.
- d. Bolster formal and informal employee onboarding, beyond the first two weeks, to include topics and experiences such as:
 - How they contribute to achieving our mission and vision
 - Basic office and job information
 - Equity and inclusion as a framework
 - Workplace safety
 - Making check-ins meaningful

Alignment

Focus Area 5

WESP

WESP





Goal D Secure Our Future

Priorities

Alignment

1. Identify long-term, stable, and diversified funding to appropriately support DCS goals and mandated services.

Focus Area 4

- a. Commit to identifying and securing long-term, stable funding streams necessary to fully support strategic goals, equity commitments, and mandated services, lessening reliance on one-time funding.
- b. Update fees on a regular basis, and consider implementing mechanisms to automatically index and update fees annually where legally allowed.
- c. Diversify revenue by proactively resourcing the pursuit and management of mission-aligned, competitive federal, state, and private grants.
- d. Formalize a strategy for securing and managing private donations that ensures value-aligned public-private partnerships, advancement of core public goals, and transparent reporting to donors and the community.

2. Effectively manage current physical assets and secure new assets.

Focus Area 4

- a. Secure and maintain land and buildings to meet current operational needs and accommodate future growth and service expansion, for example a new animal shelter and a new Elections office building.
- b. In collaboration with partners and teams across the county, manage the entire life cycle of all physical assets to ensure necessary repairs, timely replacement, and preventative maintenance to protect public investment.
- c. Look for new investments of equipment, facilities, and other tangible assets.
- d. Develop an asset information strategy, informed by an asset information committee, to create a decision-making framework that informs all maintenance and investment decisions.

3. Plan and prepare for future community and workforce needs.

Focus Area 6

- a. Support long-range planning activities for all DCS divisions, including the development, funding, and implementation of long-term visioning, planning, or policy work. These efforts include major projects such as the Urban East Multnomah County Transportation Safety Action Plan.
- b. Advance the Vance Vision Plan, a concept for the future use of Multnomah County's 90-acre Vance properties in West Gresham's Rockwood and Centennial neighborhoods.
- c. Prepare for smooth staff transitions through expected and unexpected staffing changes, such as documenting standard operating procedures and cross-training.

Implementation

Contents

Our Path Forward



Our Path Forward

Major Strategies

The DCS Strategic Plan will guide the department's commitment to creating thriving and inclusive communities over the next three fiscal years. While not an exhaustive list, the following strategies will keep the plan meaningful and timely, ensuring DCS remains accountable to our community for its progress.

Operationalizing our plan

- Map timing, responsibilities, and resources to support plan implementation
- Clarify plan alignment with key performance indicators (KPIs) and the budget

Internal communications

- Roll out the top line messages of the DCS Strategic Plan via roadshows, newsletter, graphics, and posters
- Create a page for the Strategic Plan on the internal website

Ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation

- Track and measure progress and outcomes
- Identify and address areas where we are at risk of not making progress on a goal
- Update the plan in response to changing conditions and feedback

Staff engagement

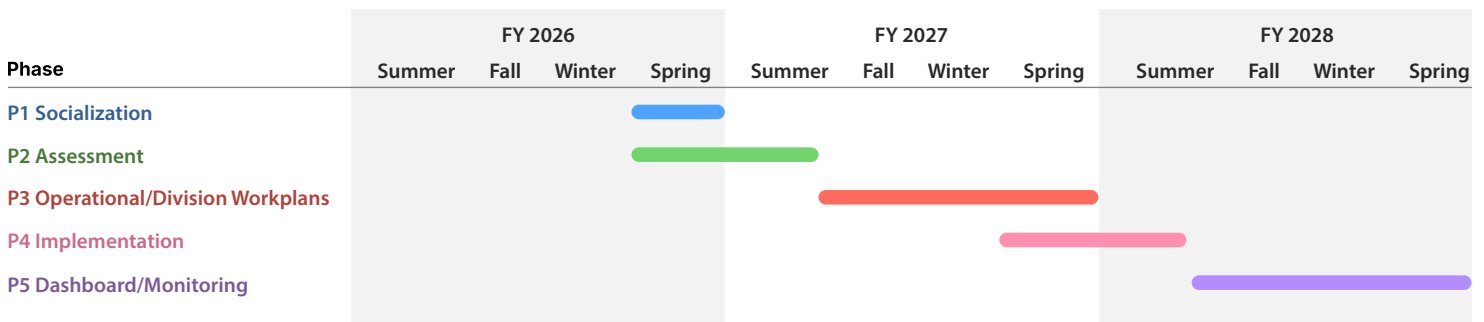
- Identify champions for the plan within each team
- Use plan to guide division workplans and prioritization
- Demonstrate and celebrate how all staff contribute to the work

Accountability to our community

- Share our progress and celebrate our successes
- Create opportunities to collect feedback and input

Timeline

The implementation timeline outlines the anticipated yearly progression of the DCS Strategic Plan. The remainder of FY 2026 and into the summer of FY 2027 are dedicated to socializing the plan, assessing the department's current readiness for implementation, and devising workplans for each division. Full implementation is slated to begin in Summer FY 2027 and continue throughout FY 2028, with progress and performance monitoring occurring throughout the year. Additionally, DCS will reassess our strategic direction to align with the next revision of the Countywide Strategic Plan in FY 2029.





The Multnomah County Animal Services volunteer program serves as a vital bridge between our sheltered animals and the community. Through structured socialization and enrichment activities, our volunteers play a critical role in maintaining the behavioral health of residents during their transition to permanent placement.

Acknowledgements

The DCS Strategic Plan was developed with the input of staff from across DCS. Our gratitude to all who contributed their thoughts and shared their experiences to help shape our next three years of service to Multnomah County.

For more information, please visit multco.us/dcs ›

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