January 2001

Strategic Plan

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STRATEGIC PLAN
Kentucky Association of Counties
(KACo)
2001 - 2011

Facilitated by
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kentucky Association of Counties (KACo) strategic planning effort was organized under the aegis of Robert Arnold, the Executive Director of KACo. Strategic Focus, a strategic planning and facilitation organization, was selected to facilitate the meetings and provide consultation regarding development of the plan.

The Kentucky Association of Counties is charting a course for the future by focusing on a 10-year (2001-2011) planning horizon. Approximately 46 members of KACo met on January 10-11, 2001 to develop the Strategic Plan. As a result of this 2-day process, the values, mission, vision, and strategic goals were identified that will provide impetus for future KACo policy decisions. The following mission was used as the basis for establishing the scope of this plan:

> **Mission Statement**: The Kentucky Association of Counties (KACo) is dedicated to serving all Kentucky counties by providing the highest quality programs/services and advocating legislative solutions for Kentucky's counties, both today and tomorrow.

Strategic plans build on the values, expectations, and interests of stakeholders and interested parties who have a vested interest in the outcome of the plan. The KACo Plan developed 6 strategic goals to accomplish its mission and the vision of where it wants to be in 10 years. The Plan is supplemented by situational analyses of KACo's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. These assessments are useful in designing the implementation or tactical plan. Initial strategies have been developed to address key issues. These are presented below and may be refined by the KACo Executive Committee and the Board of Directors members. Long-term and short-term actions have been identified to initiate implementation of the Strategic Plan.

A summary of the strategic goals is listed below:

1. Conduct a needs assessment of public entities to maximize participation of counties in KACo, in order to enhance KACo's financial status.

2. Conduct a comprehensive personnel study to revamp personnel policies and training.

3. Implement innovative technology to provide effective communication and resources between counties and public entities, including between KACo and NACo.

4. Formulate bylaws of the organization, which facilitate communication among all boards and fosters harmony and unity with the organization. These bylaws will include policies and needs assessment protocols and standards.

5. Establish strategic alliances with other organizations, such as affiliates, NACo, and The League of Cities.

6. Establish a single location for KACo and all affiliated organizations, including a resource center.

The gap analysis conducted on the situational analysis revealed key issues that required development of appropriate strategies to achieve the strategic goals listed above. The following strategies were designed to resolve the key issues discovered in the gap analysis:

- Obtain the endorsement, acceptance, and commitment to the strategic plan from employees, program boards, and the KACo's Board of Directors.

- Develop effective communication processes and tools to meet the needs of KACo clients and its employees.

- Obtain the essential resources to ensure that KACo effectively meets the needs of its clients and stakeholders.

- Develop new programs and enhance existing programs to effectively meet the needs of Kentucky county governments by expanding our services to include all counties and entities.

- Develop an effective needs assessment process and a professional marketing and KACo advertising plan.

- Communicate this strategic plan to all KACo units for development of appropriate tactical and implementation plans and develop for each unit appropriate performance-based success indicators.

As a result of the successful planning process, the KACo participants provided unanimous agreement on both the process and the elements of the product. Discussions with the plan stakeholders and the opportunity provided to review the Plan has minimized turf and organizational obstacles. Plan developers expect that any problems that remain will be resolved during the implementation of the strategies.

STRATEGIC PLAN
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INTRODUCTION

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

Strategic planning is a process that guides a group from where it is now to a desired future state, paying particular attention to the path describing how the group will get there. The process utilized in developing the KACo Plan was completed during an intensive two-day planning process conducted off-site in Frankfort, Kentucky. Our selected contractor, Strategic Focus, uses a process that they developed to ensure minimal stakeholder conflicts and maximum buy-in of the resulting long-range plan. The process design identifies paths of agreement into the future and enables full stakeholder involvement. Strategic Focus is a planning and facilitation organization, having extensive planning experience. The firm has completed numerous public health plans and specializes in the health care and organizational challenges facing Kentuckians.

It is our desire that all participants identify the completed plan as their plan and as a result have sufficient ownership to commit their time and resources to its completion. Stakeholders are constituents or representatives of constituents who have a stake in KACo achievements, policies, decisions, and resource allocation. KACo participants have a strong commitment to the recognition, understanding, and problem solving needs facing county governments in Kentucky.

Unanimous approval was required and obtained by voice vote at each step of the process. We regard this voting process as an important part of ensuring consensus of the participants and in addressing communication, trust or "turf invasion" issues which need to be resolved by the planning participants. KACo Strategic Plan participants included the highest elected officials from numerous Kentucky counties; all members of the KACo board of directors were invited and the employees of KACo were in attendance.

This strategic planning process charts a path to a desired future state by understanding where the group wants to go, reflective of stakeholder and organization expectations, and then charting a path from the present (where we are now) to the desired future state. Values are principles or closely held beliefs that tend to drive decisions that people make. In the process created and refined by Strategic Focus, the values identified by the group are used in the construction of the mission, vision, and strategic goals. The mission statement is a one-sentence articulation of the purpose of the organization. It should be congruent with the values and provide an umbrella for the vision and strategic goal section. The vision should be a brief and exciting summary of where the organization wants to be at the end of the planning horizon. Completion of goals and strategies accomplishes the vision.

The environmental scan is used primarily for internal planning processes and is targeted at making implementation efforts for the strategic plan more effective. It consists of the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the organization. The objective is to build on an organization's strengths and opportunities while considering how to best navigate obstacles and overcome weaknesses.

The essence of strategic planning is to set inspiring goals and guide implementation so that the vision can be achieved. The obstacles to the plan are identified through a gap analysis process that uses both an environmental scan and a SWOT analysis to identify the top five key issues. Strategies are developed which address the key issues for the organization. The KACo Plan also includes specific milestones for implementation, organized under each strategy to address key issues. The construction of these strategies links the strategic plan with the implementation plan (sometimes referred to as the tactical plan).

STRATEGIC PLANNING PARTICIPANTS

A list of participants and the organizations that they represent follows:

TABLE 1
PARTICIPANTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE KENTUCKY ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

ATTENDEES

Bob Arnold	Joe Greathouse	Randall Phillips
Sue Blakeman	Wayne Gunnell	Michael Ray
Pamela Bollinger	Kris Hockensmith	Eddie Rogers
Robert Brown	Bob Howe	Bertie Sandy
Bob Buchanan	David Jenkins	David Santana
Richard Burnley	Dwayne Jett	Gina Schafer
Don Butler II	Cathy Jones	Stephen Shackelford
Sandy Chapman	Rae Gina Kelley	Harold Taylor
Sonya Chesser	Bruce Lawson	Christy Terry
Jenni Philpot-Clark	Gil McCarty	Tommy Turner
Larry Crigler	Hugh McCormick	Laura Wagers
Lynn Crouser	April Mitchell	Larry Whitaker
Larry Davis	Tom Moorman	Betty White
Larry Denney	Denny Nunnelley	Tony Wilder
R. W. Gilbert	Billy O'Banion	Nancy Yelton
Mary Jane Ginter	Sue Carole Perry	

KENTUCKY ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
STRATEGIC PLAN VALUES, MISSION AND VISION

VALUES

Any plan that is based on value-based decision making, as opposed to an assessment of facts, should begin with identification of the core values that drive the plan. Identification of values is an integral step in achieving full participation in the Kentucky Association of Counties. The strategic planning process resulted in identification of a rich and comprehensive set of values, as shown below.

Values Represented by Plan

Respect / Courtesy / Tolerance	Effective Communication
Teamwork / Inclusiveness / Cooperation	Inspirational / Motivational / Innovative
Ethics/ Professionalism / Loyalty	Outcome-Focused
Efficient / Effective & Accountable	Continuous Quality Improvement

The core values identified by the stakeholders in strategic planning are used to establish the parameters by which future decisions will be made and to establish the foundation for the establishment of policy. The first of the values identified, **respect / courtesy / tolerance** describes the basic tenants of modern, progressive organizations; these organizations create an organizational environment which results in a quality work environment. The organization's employees aspire to maximize organizational **effectiveness and efficiency** through the retention of **quality, dedicated** long-term employees. The organization benefits from their expertise and collective experience.

The values of **teamwork / inclusiveness / cooperation** are essential to the unification of an organization that has both diverse and highly focused units. It means that both the employees and the Board of Directors members recognize the essential nature of working as an integrated team. **Ethics / professionalism / loyalty** reflect the importance that all in the planning process place on providing the highest quality service at the best possible prices. These values support the stated need for the plan to build the best possible plan for KACo to serve its clients and to provide them with the maximum degree of **accountability** and a strong focus on self evaluation through identification of **performance-based outcomes**. This approach is the foundation of the implementation of total quality management (TQM) and **continuous quality improvement** (CQI) programs. The values of the plan provide an excellent value platform for the accomplishment of the organization's mission.

MISSION STATEMENT

This mission statement provides a firm context for KACo's work with Kentucky's county governments:

Kentucky Association of Counties
Mission Statement

The Kentucky Association of Counties (KACo) is dedicated to serving all Kentucky counties by providing the highest quality programs/services and advocating legislative solutions for Kentucky's counties, both today and tomorrow.

VISION

The following vision states where KACo would like to be in the Year 2011:

KACo Vision 2011

The Kentucky Association of Counties aspires to be a nationally recognized public service organization that provides the most comprehensive, innovative, and cost-effective services for its members. KACo seeks to set the standard for the delivery of services to county government, thereby raising the bar for others to emulate.

KACo seeks to achieve 100% participation by all of its 120 county governments. KACo will offer an unparalleled level of programs and services to its members. KACo will provide for its employees and affiliates a state-of-the-art complex, housing staff, association offices, conference facilities, and a public policy research and technology center. KACo will continue to be county government's number one partner in delivering services to meet the unique challenges facing Kentucky's county governments in the 21st Century.

STRATEGIC GOALS

The strategic goals, or key achievements, will focus and guide KACo's implementation efforts. As noted in the description of how this strategic planning process is designed, the completion of goals and strategies accomplishes the Vision.

The following goals of KACo were identified by the planning participants:

1. Conduct a needs assessment of public entities to maximize participation of counties in KACo, in order to enhance KACo's financial status.

    - Develop and implement a needs survey instrument.
    - Develop a needs assessment report for distribution to KACo directors and employees.
    - Analyze the report and make decisions on additional services/programs (and existing ones) to provide to county governments and public entities.
    - Identify measurable objectives for performance of KACo business areas.
    - Evaluate feasibility of KACo cooperative purchasing.
    - Integrate information into business plan.
    - Coordinate implementation in advertising and marketing.

2. Conduct a comprehensive personnel study to revamp personnel policies and training.

    - Establish Human Resources Director and Division of KACo.
    - Develop job descriptions and performance standards for all KACo employees.
    - Develop uniform travel policies and procedures for all KACo officers and employees.

3. Implement innovative technology to provide effective communication and resources between counties and public entities, including between KACo and NACo.

    - Redesign and upgrade Web site as part of continuous improvement program.
    - Assist all counties in coming "on-line" with a KACo or related e-mail address.
    - Provide information technology (IT) consulting and clearinghouse; consider new computer-based technology services to meet "customer" needs.

4. Formulate bylaws of the organization, which facilitate communication among all boards and fosters harmony and unity with the organization. These bylaws will include policies and needs assessment protocols and standards.

5. Establish strategic alliances with other organizations, such as affiliates, NACo, and The League of Cities.

    - Leadership, outreach, and support.
    - Formalize partnerships and alliances; identify opportunities to share and leverage resources.

6. Establish single location for KACo and all affiliated organizations, including a resource center.

    - Fundraising/foundation exploration.
    - Economic feasibility study.
    - Decision, possible groundbreaking followed by "Grand Opening."

The diversity and breadth of the goals reflects the comprehensive viewpoints of participants working within groups. An attempt was made to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure the attainability of the plan.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS ANALYSIS

The strategic goals help to clarify the future state. In order to chart a path from the present to the future state, the group first delineated the current state. This analysis is to be used primarily for internal planning and assessment, rather than being discussed in negotiations with other organizations. Therefore, we have marked the following section of the plan as **For Internal KACo Use Only**.

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis is used to identify and describe the key elements of the current state. To this current state analysis we have added the sections identifying unique capabilities and training needs.

STRENGTHS   For Internal KACo Use Only

KACo has numerous strengths. The diversity of its membership and the existing base provide KACo with a foundation for statewide outreach and growth. The strengths of KACo are:

- Its employees
- Loyalty of counties to KACo
- Surplus in both insurance programs and loan programs
- Experienced/knowledgeable leadership
- Diversified programs
- Effective Web-site
- Centralized location in the state
- Annual convention
- Broadest insurance coverage
- Best finance pogroms in state
- Longevity
- Individuals participating in Board of Directors and program boards
- Newsletter (Viewpoints)
- Partnerships with affiliate associations
- Vendors (strong/reputable)
- Service higher percentage of counties than any other organization (Market leader)
- Grant writing capabilities within KACo

WEAKNESSES   For Internal KACo Use Only

The weaknesses identified by the group are useful in developing strategies, which will be robust in accomplishing KACo's aspirations:

1. Lack of respect
2. Reputation (negative)
3. Lack of external trust and respect
4. Lack of internal trust and respect

5. Lack of communication – internal and external
6. Lack of clear job descriptions/duties/responsibilities (personal) –"what is expected of me?"
7. Employee relations with board members and KACo "clients"; "Do we know them?"
8. No external marketing-what do the counties want? What can we offer ?
9. Lack of teamwork- "Us vs. them" mentality
10. Gossip
11. Lack of interaction with administration
12. Lagging behind technologically
13. No cross training
14. Inadequate office space
15. No new employee orientation
16. Need better telephone system
17. Not everyone follows procedures, purchase orders, requests for time off procedures.
18. No computerized "master calendar" to know who is out of office, return date, etc.
19. Standardized pay scale
20. Inadequate office equipment – need more printers
21. Lack of accountability
22. Lack of an Office Procedures manual
23. Lack of recognition for a job well done
24. Lack of a KACo organization profile or manual
25. Legitimate compensatory time
26. Building is not accessible to disabled persons

OPPORTUNITIES

There are numerous opportunities that KACo can take advantage of to reach its Vision 2011:

- Community-based program expansion
- Expand C.O.L.T. and K.A.L.F. to private sector
- Closer relationship with management and staff to create a common bond, in order to reach and set goals
- Mass purchasing agreements with county governments
- A discount program for counties that participate 100% with all KACo programs
- More open communication with Board of Directors, executive committee and the administrative branch
- Cross training of staff in project management skills for use in field application in order to heighten job security and decrease boredom

THREATS

The antithesis of opportunities is threats to KACo's mission and organizational practices. Specific implementation plans can be developed to navigate issues and priorities which may undermine the accomplishments of the organization. The identified threats are:

1. Change image
2. Competition

3. Current office technology
4. Morale – employee retention
5. Leadership
6. Lack of cross training
7. Lack of office space/handicap-accessible space and services
8. Lack of security of facility
9. Lack of cooperation with affiliate associations
10. Lack of communication

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

The Environmental Scan analysis is used to identify and describe the key elements of the current state that are specifically related to human resources and capabilities, equipment, and brick and mortar issues, also known as facilities.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES

Good leadership
Policy development-chain of command
New programs-offer more services
Effective means of communication between the Board and the staff
Travel policies, boards and staff
Teamwork and harmony – motivation
Carrying out your responsibilities with communication and cooperation
New building for KACo organization
Risk management to reduce claims by one-third
Ensure financial equity
Establish trust between all staff members and boards
Employee benefit programs for all counties
Resource and policy center

Teleconferencing and videoconferencing
Interactive member access for member information regarding all programs
Wire for fiber optics access
At least one building should behandicapped-accessible
- Meeting and conference space
- Space available for affiliate associations
- Interstate access
- Available work station for visitors
- Indoor designated smoking areas
- Indoor exercise facility and locker room areas
- Geothermal HVAC, a backup power source
- Adequate parking
- Basement
- Adequate bathrooms
- Adequate storage
- Building and site committee
- Commercial kitchen

GAP ANALYSIS

KEY ISSUES

The key issues were identified using a collaborative identification and problem-solving approach, generally referred to as a Gap Analysis. Key issues were determined by looking at critical successes, key obstacles, and the elements necessary to implement the strategic plan. The identification of key issues requires the construction of strategies to resolve or allow the navigation of the issues. Key issues are not by tradition numbered unless they have been prioritized.

The Gap Analysis identified six key issues as listed below:

- Marketing/Advertising Programs
- Needs Assessment (Credibility, Accountability)
- Enhance and Refine Existing Programs to meet needs of counties
- Develop New Programs to meet needs of counties
- Communication (development of policies and procedures, training and cross training)
- Plan implementation and updating (professional planning, plan evaluation, fiscal responsibility)

STRATEGIES

STRATEGY I

Key Issue: Marketing/Advertising Plan / Needs Assessment

Strategy: After the development and analysis of a customer needs assessment, employ a marketing consultant/firm to develop a first rate marketing plan.

Short -Term Actions
- Form an Inter-organizational Committee to design the customer-based needs assessment tool.
- Implement the customer needs assessment tool.
- Provide the KACo Board of Directors and employees with the results of the needs study with a request for strategies to identify needed product and service lines.
- Design the specifications for the employment of a professional marketing firm having a track record of success for similar organizations.
- Select and employ a professional marketing company.

Long -Term Actions
1. Review and evaluate marketing strategy
2. Establish internal public relations department
3. Expand and implement marketing strategy

STRATEGY 2

Key Issue: Enhancing Existing Programs

Strategy: Enhance and refine existing programs by expanding services to include all counties and entities.

Short -Term Actions:
Provide organization-wide education, cross training, and cross support to ensure employees have general knowledge of all programs (staff and board)

- Identification of customer friendly support staff and the cross training of staff to ensure that customers are routed to proper site within KACo.
- Refinement of the telephone system to ensure central operators or receptionist can locate appropriate staff members throughout KACo.
- Viewpoint publication will highlight a program per month to profile its functions, successes, and employees.
- Promotion of KACo at affiliate conferences and KACo conferences.
- Hire in-house loss control representative.
- Expand training to include employees of elected officials.

Long-Term Actions
1. Field offices which will provide personal visits to all entities.
2. Rebates and incentives/multi-policy discounts.
3. Creation of awards; i.e. award for fewest accidents.

4. Overview and briefings of KACo programs conducted during "new official training" of KACo employees.
5. Enhanced benefits within insurance programs; i.e. dental benefits.

STRATEGY 3

Key Issues: Develop and offer new programs

Strategy: Generate new income for KACo and better serve our members.

Short-Term Actions
Though the use of the needs assessment in strategy no. 1 determine the feasibility of the developing and offering of the following facilities and services:

- Information technology resource center
- Credit union
- Travel agency
- Deferred compensation
- Health insurance (self insured)
- Sponsoring a KACo credit card with a regional bank
- Technology assisting and consulting to counties

Long-Term Actions
1. Determine the feasibility of offering percentage discount for increased participation
2. After one year of implementation of new program(s), re-evaluate and review cost assessments and program effectiveness.

STRATEGY 4

Issue: Effective Communication

Strategy: Evaluate existing formal communication processes and supplement those effective existing practices communication processes that inform both the customers and employees within KACo on new programs, changes in practices, new capabilities and those services that have been replaced with ones of higher value.

Short Term Actions
- Aggressively review and act on the resolutions of the personnel committee that impact travel, sick leave, general resolutions/changes, and bylaw changes from KACo Board of Directors.
- Examine and implement technology enhancements that improve the quality of work life and customer responsiveness.
- Develop informational packets for both customers and employees regarding programs, boards and the benefits of KACo membership.

Long -Term Actions
1. Provide effective training to both BOD members and to KACo employees regarding benefits, human resources issues, purchasing and travel requirements, and staff / manager education.
2. Provide cross training of staff and implement succession planing for critical positions.