



# STATE OF ALLEGAN COUNTY 2012

PRESENTED BY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR  
ROBERT J. SARRO TO THE  
COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
June 1, 2012

**Table of Contents ..... 2**

**State of Allegan County ..... 3**

    Letter from County Administrator..... 3

    Support a united and ENGAGED WORKFORCE..... 4

    Continuously improve our PROCESSES..... 6

    Maintain our FINANCIAL STABILITY ..... 7

        2012 Budget..... 7

        Financial Challenges..... 8

    Provide valuable and necessary quality services to our CUSTOMERS..... 10

    Major Projects (Law Enforcement, Sheriff’s Office & Corrections Center)..... 13

    Conclusion ..... 15

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**Allegan County Leadership Teams..... 16**

**Strategy Map ..... 18**

**Mission & Vision Statements ..... 19**

**Value Descriptions ..... 20**

## Letter from County Administrator

I am proud to present the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual State of Allegan County, in which I will reflect on some of the accomplishments of the past year and discuss current and future initiatives aligned towards Allegan County's growth and prosperity. This address comes to you as a result of the County's first strategic map that has been constructed based on the organizational mission, vision, and values.

When I began with the County in 1997 as a PC Technician, I was excited about the good things going on within the organization and motivated by opportunities for improvement. I was eager to lead change and was faced with the reality our culture at the time was not fully supportive of continuous improvement. Like many county organizations, we did not have a consistent organizational culture; did not entirely operate as a single organization; were not aligned to the same values and were not necessarily moving toward the same goals. We had many successes in our history; however, organizationally, we were in "Silo's." When speaking about change it was not uncommon to hear comments such as, "Allegan County is government; you cannot change it; just keep your head down." Author Mark Twain once said, "If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you always got." While we did experience success our environment had limitations. To get beyond those limitations we would have to break down age old paradigms. County government structure makes that difficult. To a degree it is fragmented by design: we have a Board of Commissioners governing policy, resources, and the overall checkbook; five independent elected offices recognized as co-employers with the Board, three independent courts under the county roof and finances but separate organizations and employers; and then eleven collective bargaining units.

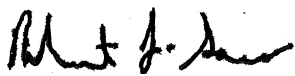
This sounds like a recipe for power struggle and not unity. However, what I saw within the organization was a spirit of unity ready to shine. It was not always visible in daily meetings or negotiations but one could see it when the organization had to pull together to support a fellow employee who experienced difficult times and needed help. I believed if we could learn about our structure, why and how it existed, and mutually respect it we could get beyond its perceived limitations and embrace that same spirit of unity into our everyday practices.

Today, because so many team members shared in that vision, we are building a culture of continuous improvement based on our core values of: Honesty, Integrity, Commitment, and Respect. These values frame our decisions. Four overarching strategic goals have been identified to guide the organization toward continuous improvement:

- 1) SUPPORT A UNITED AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE.
- 2) CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE OUR PROCESSES.
- 3) MAINTAIN OUR FINANCIAL STABILITY.
- 4) PROVIDE VALUABLE AND NECESSARY QUALITY SERVICES TO OUR CUSTOMERS.

I would like to thank the organization for the unified effort that went into making the document a success.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Sarro,  
County Administrator

**The first goal, SUPPORT A UNITED AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE.**

According to a 2003 study by International Survey Research (ISR), organizations with low levels of employee engagement found that productivity fell. Conversely, organizations with high levels of engagement found that their productivity rose. An engaged workforce lays the foundation by which processes can be improved upon, leading to efficiencies, productivity and quality customer service. Allegan County realizes to improve we must engage and empower employees at all levels of the organization. Management must focus on the development of others and clear barriers to progress identified by the employees who are directly carrying out the daily responsibilities of the organization.

Three strategic priorities have been developed and aimed at supporting a united and engaged workforce. Specific projects and/or initiatives have been listed under each strategic priority.

**1) Foster a positive, team-based work environment.**

- Employee Engagement Team (EET) – The EET exists to, listen to and learn from all employees so we can suggest ideas and changes to the workplace culture which will support leadership in its quest to nurture the total wellbeing and talent of employees. The engagement team’s first task was to conduct a survey demonstrating the current status of engagement within our organization. A 2011 survey, employees were asked “If they were the head of the Engagement Team, what 3 top priorities they would want us to work on in the next 2 years?” As a result three key initiatives are actively being developed:
  - **Improved Communication Organization-wide**
    - A communication focus group of about 40 participants representing many different positions and departments identified opportunities for improvement. The exercise resulted in the following three priorities being established:
      - Safe Opportunities for Two-Way Communication
      - Frequent/Ongoing Communication
      - Performance Management
  - **Recognition for Individuals, Teams and Departments**
    - A section of the organizational blog has been developed to enable individuals to recognize the efforts of others.
    - Recognition programs are being developed with an emphasis on acknowledging individuals for their performance linked to the organization’s values and strategy.
  - **Team-Building Opportunities**
    - The EET has successfully hosted lunch and learn sessions for employees and is currently developing other opportunities for team-building.
- “Watercooler” Blog – The “Watercooler” is a tool that provides an opportunity for open communication across the organization, builds transparency, and breaks down departmental walls. Overall, this tool aids in more informed decision making and continuous improvement.
- Performance Evaluations – Employees often fear performance evaluations will be used for discipline rather than a development tool. Currently, there is inconsistency as to which departments conduct evaluations. In a continued effort to change the County culture to a “continuous improvement” model, a standard performance evaluation tool must be developed for County leadership (management). Evaluations should have a clear connection with the County’s strategy. Last year, the County Administrator was the first to undergo a process utilizing the new tool. The tool proved useful; however, there are several improvements to be considered before it is deployed further within the organization.

- Management/Team Structure – We are transitioning our management structure to a circular model designed to encourage collaboration and moving away from the historical vertical/horizontal models. This is a difficult task to accomplish, but we have started with using our strategic map as our guide. We now have in place four Executive Directors made up of existing team members coordinating and providing support for four overarching goals and strategic initiatives. This provides well-rounded perspective and input into recommendations to the Board and executive decisions made.
- Team Communication – Providing information throughout the organization is a key to engagement. We are currently developing a communication and reporting plan designed to outline how and when important organizational information will be distributed. One example is the summary of actions sent to the organization after regular Board of Commissioner meetings. In addition, teams are forming to provide more consistent communication across departments and agencies. For example, The County Executive Team works in conjunction with the Clerk/Register, Treasurer, Drain Commissioner, Prosecutor, Sheriff, and Court Administrators as a collective organizational leadership team in forming the annual budget, collective bargaining, major initiatives, etc. Another example is daily work teams design to identify and resolve issues with daily operations.
- Leadership Conference – In October 2012 we have the first annual Leadership Conference within the organization. Speakers will educate and motivate all levels of management from throughout the organization.

### **2) *Employ and retain high-performing, quality employees.***

- Education – The County has prioritized continuing education of our employees through higher education, certification programs, and professional development. Particular focus is being given to educating employees on the County itself. County leadership has been hosting education sessions to teach employees about the budget, strategic plan, health insurance, among other topics. It is our initial observation that engagement and understanding increases as a result of this approach and new ideas begin to form.
- Hiring Process – Leading employers recognize traditional process and ideals such as customer service, profitability and innovation depend on people. Many top performing organizations focus on their employees as a “make or break” influence on the success of their organizations strategy. Commitment to hiring better candidates quickly and efficiently is fundamental to viewing people as a strategic influence is the commitment to hiring better candidates, quickly and efficiently. To accomplish this Allegan County organized a lean process to improve the hiring process from beginning to end.

### **3) *Promote safety and wellness.***

- Facility Emergency Response Plans (FERP) – Safety of our citizens and our employees is a top priority for Allegan County. We understand there is no immunity from natural, chemical, biological, and human threats and dangers; however, we can be prepared. This past year the organization has launched an ongoing initiative to increase drills, provide education, and perform ongoing evaluations aimed at improving our emergency preparedness.
- Wellness – Allegan County, understanding unhealthy lifestyles can be changed with the right support structure, is embarking on a Wellness Program. Employers are finding whether the issues involve smoking cessation, stress management, obesity and depression; targeted programs based on the latest advances in behavioral health research and technology are

providing increasingly effective and affordable methods for improving workforce health and productivity. The outcomes of a Wellness Program will:

- Enhance workforce health and productivity and contribute to employer financial health.
- Complete integration to provide the most effective approach for managing potentially costly acute and chronic conditions.
- Solutions to reduce costs, increase employee care and provide a better work environment.

**The second goal is to CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE OUR PROCESSES.**

Through continuous evaluation and improvement of support processes and service delivery, we will increase efficiency and cost effectiveness maximizing value for our citizens. We are leveraging the strengths and proven successes of both our Information Services and Land Information Services departments by creating a single team focused on process improvement, performance measurements, and project management.

Three strategic priorities have been developed and aimed at continuously improving our processes. Specific projects and/or initiatives have been listed under each strategic priority.

**1) *Be efficient and cost effective.***

- Project Management – Centralized management and coordination has enabled better prioritization of projects and allocation of resources. While effective strategies for measuring and reporting on outcomes are still being developed by the project management team, it is becoming standard practice to review tasks, objectives and outcomes with stakeholders once a project has been completed to identify steps that were overlooked and areas that could be improved. These lessons learned are being documented for use as templates to efficiently plan and better execute similar projects in the future.
- LEAN is a strategic goal of continuous improvement. It is designed to dramatically improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the County. The concept is focused on identifying and eliminating non-value added activity (waste) involved in systems and processes. LEAN actively engages all employees, not just leadership, in finding ways to work smarter to better serve their customers. Our hiring process and benefits management are examples of processes undergoing LEAN review.
- Judicial Concurrent Court Jurisdiction – By working collaboratively, court processes are expected to be more efficient and service more readily available. Generally, the various courts and judges will provide cross-jurisdictional support by hearing cases for each other as needed and working within a collective judicial council.

**2) *Measure and learn from outcomes.***

- Performance Measurement – We are developing a system to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of projects and operations. This will help make important decisions related to prioritizing and allocating resources.

**3) *Seek and implement innovative solutions.***

- Departmental Structures – Similar to the review of management structure, we continue to evaluate ways to work more collectively as departments and share resources, space, processes, and information. For example, we were able to move our Equalization Department to our County Services building bringing it closer to our Land Information Services technology and enabling us to eliminate a vacant reception position. This project also allowed Equalization to

partner with the Register of Deeds office to be able to provide service to citizens at our downtown location.

- Credit Card Payments – The Treasurer, working in conjunction with Information Services and departments throughout the organization, continues to expand credit card payments as an option for citizens when doing business with the County. In 2011, \$1,111,867 was collected in credit card payments.
- Digitized Court Records – The County Clerk, working collaboratively with Information Services and Circuit/Family, District and Probate Courts, purchased a court document imaging solution to digitize court records. The solution provides the county with a means of integrating digital images of court records with the Judicial Information System (JIS) program to enhance the ability of the staff in the Clerk's office to provide information and copies of court records to other offices and the general public in an accurate and timely manner.
- eRecording – The Register of Deeds, working with Information Services, will be deploying a new Government Records Management (GRM) eRecording system for recording land records.
- Web Development Services – We will continue to develop our County website adding access to information and services. Significant citizen time and money has already been saved by deploying a fully interactive web-based GIS mapping application, Equalization data and park shelter rental.

### **The third goal is to MAINTAIN OUR FINANCIAL STABILITY.**

The County's market value has remained relatively strong at just over \$10 billion (15% reduction since 2008) despite the weakening state economy. The County's overall finances continue to be strong and stable as a result of many difficult and responsible decisions. Allegan County maintains an unreserved General Fund fund-balance of 10% of General Fund budgeted expenditures. Additional liquidity is available in the budget stabilization fund which is funded at its statutory maximum of approximately \$4.5 million. The Delinquent Tax Revolving Fund (DTRF) is maintained at a minimum of the annual tax settlement (approximately \$9MM). Allegan County maintains a considerably low debt level.

Historically, the County has experienced an approximate average of 3-5% overall revenue growth with years as high as 7% prior to the latest economic downturn. The past few years have demonstrated unprecedented declines in tax revenues. Generally, even during a year of revenue growth, the need and/or expectation for services often exceed the available resources for any county. For 2010, 2011 and 2012 combined, we reduced expenditures by approximately \$5MM and utilized approximately \$2MM in budget stabilization funds. Fortunately, due to efficient and judicious departmental expenditures, we continue to experience annual surpluses to maintain a healthy budget stabilization balance as a tool to navigate this economic downturn and other threats such as the elimination of state revenue sharing.

### **2012 Budget**

For FY 2012, the initial deficit was \$2,558,827. The Board allocated up to \$750,000 from the budget stabilization fund to be transferred as revenue into the general fund. In addition, our local share of casino slot revenue was projected at \$350,000. These adjustments brought the deficit down to \$1,458,827.

Overall general fund compensation was estimated to increase by \$391,600. This included a 5% health cost increase, wage step increases, and a wage adjustment for only those groups that have an active contract with a scheduled adjustment for 2012. Due to the efforts and sacrifices of our engaged employees the personnel increases were reduced to 0 for 2012. The final deficit was reduced through collaborative efforts of all departments resulting in a balanced FY 2012 budget.

**Financial Challenges:**

- Personal Property Tax (PPT) – The potential elimination of PPT would reduce County General Fund revenue by \$1.6MM annually.
- State Revenue Sharing – The continued loss or reduction of Revenue Sharing to the Counties continues to be a threat. The County prior to the State’s hold on Revenue Sharing allocation and authorization of an early tax collection Allegan County received approximately \$2.2MM annually. The 2012 budget included \$1.372MM, a significant reduction. Under the State’s Economic Vitality Incentive Program (EVIP) the County is expected to receive \$1.6MM for 2013.
- Continued decrease in property values and increase in foreclosures.
- Unfunded Mandates:
  - It is important to note the impact of State mandates on the County’s budget and the funding ratio between the parties. For example, when one adds the General Fund portion of judicial expenditures to the Child Care Fund the total Judicial expenditures are just over \$10M. However, the County receives only approximately \$3.5M from the State.
  - Health Services is another example. \$1.5M out of the approximate \$2.4M General Fund expenditure on Health and Human Services is transferred to the Health Department Fund to carry out State mandated services. All revenue sources considered, the Health Department Fund is approximately \$4.6M. The County receives only approximately \$772,000 for these mandated services. This is nowhere near the 50% funding level supposedly in place for counties.
  - Unfunded State mandates combined with population growth have continued to place a high and increasing demand on many County services.

Three strategic priorities have been developed and aimed at maintaining our financial stability. Specific projects and/or initiatives have been listed under each strategic priority.

***1) Develop and maintain a balanced operational budget.***

- Maintain or increase current AA Bond Rating – Because of Allegan County’s overall good financial standing, we have secured an excellent bond rating which saves the citizens significant dollars when bonds are necessary. For example, within the past year we have saved money for both the Village of Martin and City of Wayland by using our bond rating to refinance bonds.
- Healthcare Plan Redesign – Allegan County has proactively worked with employee groups over the years to contain healthcare costs and fairly distribute premium cost between the County and employees. We have made a lot of progress but recognize we must address the root issue high claims cost. In 2011, the State enacted Public Act 152 (PA 152) regulating the amount premium government employers could pay. This provided us an opportunity to educate and work collaborative with all employee groups to redesign our current plans to be more affordable. As a result of the excellent caliber of employees working for Allegan County, this is proving very successful. We are in the process of identifying three new plans that will be offered equally to all employee groups and will be consistent with PA 152. This effort is also linked directly to our wellness initiative. Employee wellness is critical to reducing our actual claims cost. We expect to be on our new plans by January 2013.
- Voluntary Separation Plan (VSP) – This plan was implemented after requesting budget ideas from our employees. It is designed to provide an incentive to employees who are considering



leaving the organization. Considering layoff of personnel would have been unavoidable during this economic downturn, the VSP has been a win-win for the County and employees. Among other benefits it has saved unemployment costs, provided better planning for position replacement, saved jobs for employees who wish to remain with the County, and provided departments with cost reduction options to balance the budget.

**2) *Maintain reserve funds.***

- Through the annual evaluation of the budget policy, the County will continue to strategically manage reserve fund balances. Currently, reserve fund minimum balances are established to provide stability and financing options to meet long term needs. Annual operating surpluses are allocated through these funds based on maintaining those balances and allocated funds toward capital improvement needs.

**3) *Execute long-term financial planning.***

- Capital Improvements and Operational Plan – Development of a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) inclusive of 15 year infrastructure needs and 5 year operational needs. A long-term CIP will enable improved planning, prioritization, and resource allocation. The CIP will be directly related to our project management initiative.
- Budget Policy – We will continue the development of an annually reviewed comprehensive budget policy. This year, we are primarily focusing on policy development for special revenue funds (i.e. Central Dispatch, Child Care Fund, and Senior Service).
- County Development – The work of the Allegan County Economic Development Commission will be centered on the County’s strategic economic development plan, which was adopted in May of 2010. The purpose of the Commission will be to take a higher-level view of the County’s economic development program and offer guidance and leadership to County staff to help ensure that stakeholder needs are being met. Further, with the State of Michigan creating a much more regionalized approach with the resources of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the Allegan County Economic Development Commission will also play a significant role in economic development discussions that go beyond the borders of Allegan County.
- Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) – The Allegan County BRA continues to work towards its purpose of assisting development projects that face economic challenges due to environmental constraints. These environmental constraints range from the presence of toxic and hazardous substances to functionally obsolete and blighted properties. In 2010, the Allegan County BRA was awarded two EPA Environmental Assessment grants, one for hazardous substances and one for petroleum. Each grant was for \$200,000. To date, the BRA has used these grant funds to assist nine projects, with the two largest being the Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority in Saugatuck/Douglas and the Rock-Tenn Paper Mill in Otsego. The BRA will continue to use community outreach opportunities to recruit more Brownfield redevelopment projects throughout the County.
- NOVO 1 - Over the past two years, Allegan County, in partnership with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the City of Holland oversaw an economic development grant that has resulting in approximately 256 jobs in Northern Allegan County at the NOVO 1 call center.

**The final goal is to PROVIDE VALUABLE AND NECESSARY QUALITY SERVICES TO OUR CUSTOMERS.**

Allegan County has pledged to continuously evaluate and improve processes and service delivery, increasing the efficiency and cost effectiveness thereby maximizing value for our citizens.

Allegan County has been a model for centralized services. Human Resource, Technology, Financial, and Facility related services are centralized for all five elected departments, courts, and all departments under the Board of Commissioners.

The County has taken the centralization of services and cost sharing beyond the organization and has had several multi-government collaborations. Just a few examples are listed:

- County-Wide Central Dispatch
- Multi-County 911 back-up system
- Technology support for several local units
- West Michigan Enforcement Team (WEMET) – multi-jurisdictional drug enforcement (Allegan, Muskegon, and Ottawa)
- Solid Waste Planning
- District Court and Prosecutor Agreement with Ottawa County
- Contracts for Law Enforcement between County and local units

Three strategic priorities have been developed and aimed at providing valuable and necessary quality services to our customers. Specific projects and/or initiatives have been listed under each strategic priority.

**1) *Deliver affordable and accessible services.***

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program – Allegan County has received, a CDBG Home Improvement Grant through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). Allegan County Resource Development Committee (ACRDC) has been retained to administer this grant program on behalf of Allegan County. This is a 2-year grant in the amount of \$300,000. These funds can be used by homeowners in non-entitlement areas of the County for home repairs and improvement projects (provided the homeowner meets the grant's guidelines).
- Self Help Legal Library – Through the use of web-based technology and the availability of a self help library staffed with a volunteer assistant, citizens will have increased access to the legal system and be better informed on legal operations.
- Medical Care Community – The Allegan County Medical Care Community was named as one of seven of Michigan's 35 county medical care facilities to have received the highest ranking of five stars overall in U.S. News & World Report's edition of 2011 Best Nursing Homes. There were 63 Michigan nursing homes out of 420 featured in the profile. The rankings highlight homes across the nation providing high-quality care and are a worthwhile tool for millions of elderly Americans and their families in search of a nursing home.
- Mental Health Treatment Court – The Mental Health Treatment Court is a two-phase program designed for adult offenders charged with one or more criminal offenses and who are having difficulty with mental health issues, are developmentally disabled, or mentally ill defendants

with co-occurring disorders (mental health/substance abuse). Since its inception in 2009, the Mental Health Treatment Court has been referred 116 defendants. Of those 116, 49 were rejected, 55 were accepted and 12 are currently pending an acceptance decision. Of the 55 who were accepted, 17 have successfully graduated, and 22 are currently in the program – 12 in Phase I and 10 in Phase II. Sixteen were discharged from the program after acceptance – 11 for cause and 5 for other reasons. The program currently accepts both felony and misdemeanor cases.

- Drug Treatment Court – Allegan County is entering its second year of providing a Drug Treatment Court and it continues to be supported by caseload data and trends in sentencing. The target population is still identified as straddle cell offenders and above. Based on the values of the community and the court, all participants of the program receive a 6 month jail sentence with a review and potential release from incarceration within 60 days. (This is a base-line requirement for the Prosecutor's Office participation.) This incarceration period is far from a simple punishment phase. Participants must "get clean" and actively engage and orient themselves to the program's strict rules and guidelines. Currently, 8 participants have been diverted from prison sentences into the program.
- Health Assessment – Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) awarded the Allegan County Health Department a planning grant to engage the community in a health needs assessment, due to the fact that we are designated as a health professional shortage area. From this project we plan to prioritize the health needs of the community, review models for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and develop a plan for addressing those needs to the underserved, uninsured, and underinsured.
- Human Services - The demand for human services continue to increase yet funding continues to become scarcer. With a focus on customer service and meeting the needs of our citizens we continue to find ways to make services more readily available. We have worked with various agencies to bring a variety of human services together under one roof with our Human Services Building including the Health Department, Senior and Veteran Services, State Department of Human Services, Michigan Works, County Development (Parks, Recreation, MSU Extension.) It has allowed an increased level of resource sharing, cost savings, and accessibility of services.
- Seniors and Veteran Services – Senior and Veteran Services shared many of the same clients, and provide very similar services. In an effort to maximize the efficiencies, and decrease the wait time to obtain an appointment the following steps were initiated:
  - The Director of Senior Services, along with the two Veteran Services staff achieved National Accreditation and now serve as County Veteran Services Officers who are able to assist Veterans with Federal Claims.
  - Senior Services staff was trained in both the Veterans State Trust Fund and County Relief fund so emergency assistance applications could be initiated regardless of the immediate availability of the Service Officers.
  - Through collaboration with the Marine Corps League, we were able to offer office space to a seasoned Veteran Services Officer who not only is able to assist with the more complex claims, but provide mentorship to the new Service Officers.
  - One Veteran Services Officer has become a Certified Medicaid and Medicare Assistance Program (MMAAP) which means that during the Open Enrollment for this program, there are now two teams to provide services at no cost to the County.

- One Veterans Services Officer is scheduled for SSI/SSDI Outreach Access and Recovery training. This is a fast track program that allows individuals who are either homeless or at eminent risk of homelessness to apply for Social Security and Disability benefits more quickly.

**2) *Engage and educate our citizenry.***

- Citizen Education/Engagement – The County is developing a process to collect input from citizens primarily with respect to the services provided by the County. This year, the Health Department will serve as a “pilot project” by implement a survey/feedback system.
- Transportation – The Transportation Department identified a lack of understanding by the public on how to effectively use public transportation services and with culture of continuous improvement, developed several informational documents. These include an ADA guide for person with a disability and seniors, several brochures on how to scheduled rides and what services are available and an annul report that better describes the programs provided. With the use of this material more people will be able to use the services offered by the County.
- Sheriff’s Beat – The Allegan County Sheriff’s Office strives to provide a community-based and problem solving policing style to our citizens; however, this has become increasingly more challenging in recent years. To support this model, the “Sheriff’s Beat” was developed as a communication tool between the community and law enforcement. The concept was to provide "real time" sharing of information, even before police reports are completed or transcribed. We continue to share information with the media through press releases regarding major crimes or events. However, the purpose of the "Sheriff's Beat" is to share the day-to-day happenings of our communities that effect everyone's quality of life in addition to providing insight into what your deputies are doing on a regular basis. It also allows us an opportunity to communicate information in an effort to help prevent and solve crime, as well as, share statistical information and safety tips to our readers. Another key benefit to the "Sheriff's Beat" is that it allows readers a chance to email back follow-up questions or requests for more information by clicking reply. It is available to anyone wishing to receive it via email and is sent out several times a week as the time to prepare it permits.
- Dashboard/Citizens Guide – Create an online Performance Dashboard and Citizens’ Guide to County Finances for Allegan County by November 1, 2012, that complies with the anticipated requirements currently set forth by the Economic Vitality Incentive Program (EVIP) for local units of government. The EVIP defines a few broad elements that should be included in the Performance Dashboard and Citizen’s Guide and offers some templates. It recognizes each unit of government is unique and therefore allows each to identify its own set of financial and operating measures to track and report.

**3) *Collaborate locally and regionally.***

- Equalization – Allegan’s Equalization Services assisted Van Buren County's requirement of having a properly certified Equalization Director. Equalization Director Blaine McLeod contracted with Van Buren to fill this role while their acting director completes the required education and is granted a Michigan Master Assessor Officer Certificate MMAO (4). This is the identical method Allegan County used in 1999 to meet its need for a properly certified Equalization Director.

- Animal Shelter – The County entered into an agreement with Wishbone Pet Rescue for the management of the Animal Shelter and care of the animals. As a private group Wishbone has more resources to recruit volunteers and generate donations. The County has continued its current level of expenditure while providing increased availability of Animal Control and enhanced services within the shelter. Expected results are increased adoptions as well as health and safety of the animals. We have reallocated Animal Control Officers, who previously ran the shelter, to be out in the field serving the public by responding to calls. We have aligned our Health Department to focus on the health and safety factors of the shelter through its oversight of the shelter, the Sheriff Department to focus on Animal Control, and Wishbone to focus on the care of the animals.
- Narrowband Radio Compliance - To meet federal regulations, fire service radios throughout the County must be replaced with narrowband compliant radios by 2013. To achieve standardization and maximize potential cost savings, Central Dispatch will be coordinating the purchase and implementation of the radio equipment. Once complete, radio coverage will be assessed and necessary improvements will be made to maintain adequate coverage.
- Future Search/Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC) Services Sub-Committee – In March of 2011, stakeholders within the Holland-Zeeland area came together for a three-day event, focused on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Governance, entitled "Future Search." What was unique? It was not just government; it was a diverse group of leaders representing the business, government, and education/non-profit sectors coming together under the Holland-Zeeland Model Communities Initiative. The Future Search event was hosted by Haworth, Inc., and Dick Haworth was actively involved as the executive champion of the effort along with his co-champion Tim Hemingway, BPW Board President. Having such a strong representation from top-level business leaders and public officials at the Future Search session proved to be a powerful forum for bringing people together to align and commit to shared goals aimed at becoming a world class community. The session resulted in several action committees, formed to take ownership of sector specific goals. The MACC Area Service Delivery Team is one of those committees, built around the principles of collaboration. Not only is it unprecedented in its approach, it has already made noticeable progress which is being reported on a regular basis.

## Major Projects

### Law Enforcement

Providing adequate law enforcement is a challenge for most rural counties and there are some factors that make it particularly challenging within Allegan County. We have approximately 115,000 residents spread out across 828 square miles. Within that geographic area we have nine cities accounting for only 35 square miles combined. While the County has some contracts in place with 6 townships and one village, the Allegan County Sheriff's Department (ACSD) is still looked to as the primary law enforcement provider to 24 townships across the County. Additionally, they must still provide law enforcement assistance to each city and village. Funding this level of law enforcement which is not a county mandated function is difficult. Currently, approximately 62% (24% courts, 12% corrections, 26% law enforcement) of the County general fund budget is allocated to the overall justice system. During times of continuous revenue growth, the County was able to sustain a level of patrol that met the expectations of most local units.

However, over the past several years law enforcement agencies across the state have been forced to reduce services. Allegan County itself has gone from a high of 61 law enforcement deputies in 2003 to 46

in 2011. The Patrol Division alone had 47 Deputies in 2008. Clearly, this is an important matter for the whole community. As such, Allegan County has partnered with all of the local units in the County to maintain a dialogue through several County-wide and regionalized meetings. Although there were many ideas put forth 5 were ranked by the group on their potential for being achievable and their potential for making a positive impact on the community. The ideas were:

- 1) Improve perception of citizenry - public education campaign.
- 2) Link the cost of the service with what service is received to determine desired public service level and what citizens are willing to pay for.
- 3) Dedicated funding for law enforcement.
- 4) Centralize Law Enforcement.
- 5) De-Centralize Law Enforcement.

Participants expressed interest in continuing dialogue around law enforcement issues as well as areas of potential collaboration in Allegan County.

Going into 2013 the ACSO is transitioning to a precinct based model that will bring the local stakeholders in each area (precinct) to the table and give them better representation as to how resources are allocated in that area.

Currently, our ACSO is working toward having 44 deputies assigned to the Patrol Division:

- 1 Lieutenant
- 8 Sergeants
- 8 Township Contracted Deputies
- 3 Traffic Unit (PA 416)
- 24 General Fund Road Patrol (6 per shift shared between 5 precincts with one Roving)

### **Sheriff's Office and Corrections Center**

Construction of a new Sheriff's Office & Corrections Center has been a top County priority for many years. While many discussions have focused around capacity of the facility, several factors also drove the need and responsibility to replace the current facility.

The current facility, located at 112 Walnut Street, Allegan, was constructed in 1961 and was built to house 62 inmates. Through four renovations, that facility now has a rated capacity of 173; however, the County has housed as many as 220 inmates. Further renovations are no longer practical. The current facility also houses all other Sheriff operations, although space limitations have forced some areas into other buildings. The current square footage is as follows:

Corrections space	28,275 sq. ft
Administrative space	4,280 sq. ft.
Law enforcement space	1,708 sq. ft
Mechanical and storage	1,115 sq. ft.
Total floor space	35,378 sq. ft.

While the County has done everything it can to continue to make the facility work, the inmate population residing within such limited space causes health and safety issues requiring a new facility. The facility is

inefficient on a cost per inmate basis to operate. The County is mandated to maintain an adequate and safe jail.

As a solution the County acquired the former Haworth Seating Plant at 640 River Street, Allegan. The site includes 193,000 square feet of office and open manufacturing space on 22 acres of land in the City of Allegan. It was purchased for \$1,775,000. The County has saved citizens over \$13MM from not having to construct new infrastructure (water, sewer, electric, etc) on an undeveloped site and from the use of an existing building.

Due to its excellent bond rating and fiscal practices the County was able to secure a low interest rate on a 20 year bond. Annual interest and fees from the Delinquent Tax Revolving Fund of approximately \$1MM will be utilized to cover the debt service (repayment). Combined with \$4MM of reserve funds, this will allow for a total project completion budget of \$19.2MM.

### **CONCLUSION**

Reflecting on the many accomplishments and current initiatives outlined in this report, it is important to recognize the connectivity of all elements to the County's strategy. Each strategy is an interrelated building block to the next enabling us to achieve results. These results are possible in all focus areas through the continuous improvement model obtainable by having expectations of excellent communication, accountability, transparency, and feedback.

At the heart of all of our collective actions and decisions are our core values of: Honesty, Integrity, Commitment, and Respect. Isadore Sharp, CEO and founder of Four Seasons has been quoted stating, "Values are only words on paper, the words have significance only if behaved; the behaviors are significant only if believed. Legendary customer service does not come from a policy manual; it comes from the heart."

Allegan County has and is striving to develop an organizational strategy that puts all of the words to actions because Isadore Sharp is right. The belief in what we are doing is beginning to shine within this organization. True to our spirit of continuous improvement, we have a lot to work on. The State of Allegan County report itself will continue to improve in its clarity and focus. Overtime I expect it will evolve with benchmarks that look further outside of the organization and community benchmarks will help guide us. However, I am extremely proud to see all of the initiatives taking place right now and the accomplishments we have to showcase. Our success belongs to every employee and agent of Allegan County Government whether elected or appointed. Many County reports exist with a specific focus on Board and/or administrative activities. Our State of Allegan County goes far beyond that. Our elected offices, courts, and other agencies are all part of the Allegan County Team and I am proud to present this report on behalf of our entire organization based on a strategy and a culture we are building together.

## Allegan County Leadership Teams

### County Board of Commissioners

Mark DeYoung, Chairman, District #4  
Tom Jessup, Vice Chairman, District #8  
Terry Burns, District #1  
Steve McNeal, District #2  
Paul VanEck, District #3  
Dean Kapenga, District #5  
Max R. Thiele, District #6  
Don Black, District #7  
Bill Sage, District #9  
Jon C. Campbell, District #10  
Larry "Casey" Jones, District #11

County Administrator  
Robert J. Sarro

### County Administrative Leadership Team

\*Robert J. Sarro, County Administrator  
\*Vickie Herzberg, Human Resources Director  
\*Steve Sedore, Information Services Director  
\*David VandeRoovaart, Budget & Finance Director  
\*Dan Wedge, Transportation Director  
Becky Blaine, Executive Assistant  
Denise Stan, Project Manager  
Jan Goswick, Central Dispatch Director  
Kevin Ricco, County Development Director  
Blaine McLeod, Equalization Director  
Bob Wakeman, Facilities Management Director  
Rashmi Travis, Health Officer  
Valdis Kalnins, Land Information Services Director  
Sherry Torres, Senior & Veterans Services Director

### County Leadership Team

Robert J. Sarro, County Administrator  
Mike Day, Circuit Court Administrator  
Linda Lenehan, District Court Administrator  
Linda Hays, Probate Court Administrator  
Becky Rininger, Drain Commissioner  
Sally Brooks, County Treasurer  
Blaine Koops, County Sheriff  
Fred Anderson, County Prosecutor  
Joyce A. Watts, County Clerk-Register

### County Judicial Team

Hon. Margaret Zuzich Bakker, Chief Circuit Court Judge  
Hon. Kevin Cronin, Circuit Court Judge  
Hon. Michael Buck, Presiding Family Court Judge  
Hon. Joseph S. Skocelas, Chief District Court Judge  
Hon. William A. Baillargeon, District Court Judge



Allegan County Leadership Teams

County Engagement Team

Robert J. Sarro  
Vickie Herzberg  
Sherry Torres  
Chris Bessert  
Dian Liepe  
Jennifer Mitchell  
Lisa Shirey  
Denise Stan  
Randy Vanatter  
Deb Jones  
Peggy French  
Jennifer Durkee  
Tammy Chapin



# Allegan County Strategy Map

*To achieve our vision and ensure Allegan County continues to progress and prosper, we MUST...*

Provide valuable and necessary quality services to our

## **CUSTOMERS**

- Deliver affordable and accessible services
- Engage and educate our citizenry
- Collaborate locally and regionally

## **Vision:**

*Provide our citizens superior and innovative services, be judicious and efficient in the expenditure of resources and promote a safe, clean and healthy environment in which to live, work and play.*

## Maintain our **FINANCIAL STABILITY**

- Develop and maintain a balanced operational budget
- Maintain reserve funds
- Execute long-term financial planning



## Support a united and **ENGAGED WORKFORCE**

- Foster a positive, team-based work environment
- Employ and retain high-performing, quality employees
- Promote safety and wellness

Continuously improve our

## **PROCESSES**

- Be efficient and cost effective
- Measure and learn from outcomes
- Seek and implement innovative solutions



## County of Allegan

**Mission Statement:** An overarching, timeless expression of the County's purpose and aspiration, addressing both what the County seeks to accomplish and the manner in which the County seeks to accomplish it.

*Allegan County shall plan, develop and evaluate the necessary policies and resources to ensure our county continues to progress and prosper.*

**Vision Statement:** An aspiring description of what the County would like to achieve or accomplish in the mid-term or long-term future. It is intended to serve as a clear guide for choosing current and future courses of action.

*Allegan County is committed to providing our citizens superior and innovative services, being judicious and efficient in the expenditure of resources and promoting a safe, clean and healthy environment in which to live, work, and play.*



## **Our Values:**

**Honesty, Integrity, Commitment and Respect** will serve as the foundation for all of our words, deeds and actions in providing services to the citizens of Allegan County.

### ***Honesty***

- We are committed to conducting all business in a truthful, transparent manner. We will learn from the truth and grow individually and collectively as an organization.

### ***Integrity***

- We are committed to being trustworthy and ethically self-governing. We will perform utilizing our individual and collective knowledge, skills and competencies in a manner which elicits trust from the individuals whom we serve.
- We are committed to being responsible and making responsible decisions. We will make impartial recommendations based on facts, knowledge and collective input.

### ***Commitment***

- We are committed to professionalism. We will advocate, engage in and support professional development. We will perform at the highest level of professional standards and at the highest degree of our capabilities collectively and individually.
- We are committed to our governmental mission and will implement governmental services, laws and policies essential to the general welfare of Allegan County residents.
- We are committed to serving the greater good as an effective, efficient and unified county government. We are dedicated to improving the status and conditions of the County by serving those it represents.

### ***Respect***

- We are committed to maintaining the dignity of everyone at all times. We value the differences in every individual and embrace these differences to build a stronger organization and community.