

## **A SNAPSHOT OF ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE SAN MATEO COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY**

**Quyen Nguyen\***

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Planning and Development unit provides support to all areas of the Human Services Agency and includes a Director of Planning and Development and 4 office support positions. Since March 2000, the Office of Planning and Development in the Human Services Agency of San Mateo County has reorganized and is now made up of 3 major sections: 1) Human Resources, 2) Administrative Support, and 3) Research, Evaluation & Planning. Grant Management, Facilities Management and Contract Management are also added and will be linked to planning efforts.

This office is responsible for a wide range of functions. Their main components include customer service, outcome-based budgeting, strategic planning and human resources policy. Even though they appear to be distinct components, these components are being viewed as interdependent and critical to successful client services. The successes of this office include its strategically designed organizational structure that is fueled by a “start up” mentality. One of the challenges is whether it can get past its “start up” mode to deliver significant results.

After studying this office, three recommendations were developed for Santa Clara County. These are strategies intended to advance planning and development further towards implementation.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

For my BASSC Executive Development Project, my learning objectives were two-fold: 1) to describe the organizational relationship between the many functions within the Office of Planning and Development in San Mateo County Human Services Agency, and 2) to define the impacts that these direct, supportive planning and evaluation services have on direct customer outcomes.

To achieve these learning objectives, I proposed to examine the following four projects, noted below, to look at the organizational structure as well as tangible customer outcomes that address these areas. The scopes of my activities included meeting attendance and file review. These projects were the Customer Service Project, Outcome-based Budgeting, Strategic Planning and Human Resources Policy Team.

As stated in the Adopted Budget for FY 1999-2000, the Planning and Development Unit provides support to all areas of the Agency and includes a Director of Planning and Development and 4 office support positions. In March 2000, the Agency underwent a structural re-organization (see Figure One). The "new" Office of Planning and Development is divided into 3 areas: Human Resources Section, Research, Evaluation & Planning Section and Administrative Support Section, as shown in the charts on the next page.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE PROJECT**

San Mateo County implements a countywide, single instrument customer service survey. In order to customize the survey, the Human Services Agency employs the following three strategies: 1) includes the HSA logo, 2) prints return address and 3) adds a box to check if respondents want to be contacted.

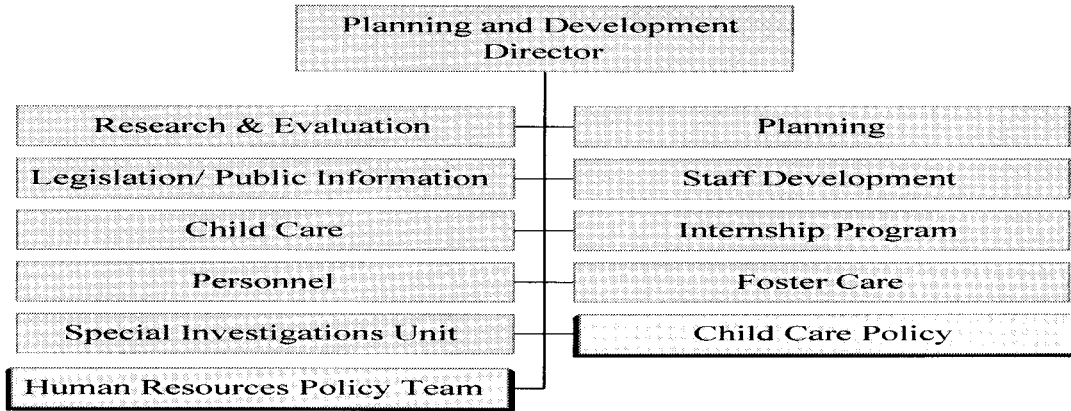
In the Human Services Agency, support staff in Planning and Development provide input and collate survey data. The Research and Evaluation Coordinator analyzes the survey results, prepares a report summarizing the survey findings and presents the survey findings to the Operations Team. Directors/Regional Managers share and discuss the findings with their staff.

For follow-up requests, the Research and Evaluation Coordinator will forward a copy of the survey to the Director responsible for the service area identified by the customer. The Director or his/her designee will follow up with the customer and will submit a written summary of the follow-up results to the Research and Evaluation Coordinator.

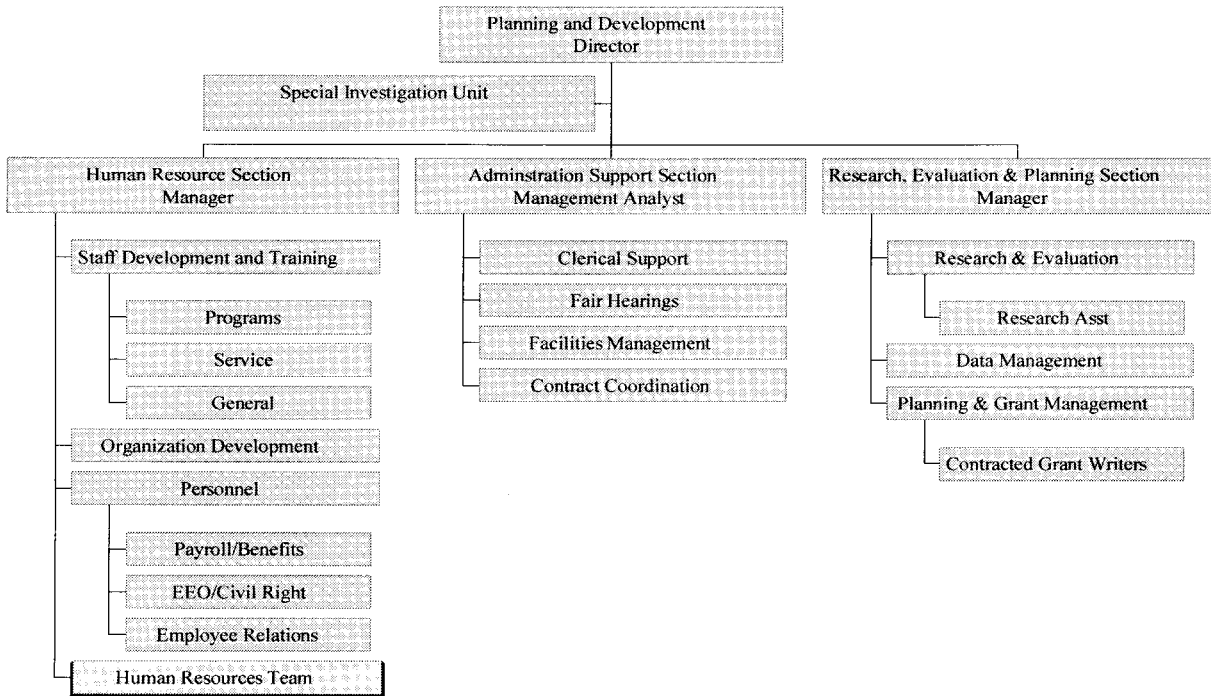
The Research and Evaluation Coordinator will also forward a copy of the survey to the Director responsible for the service area identified by the customer in instances where the customer recognizes an employee who provided excellent service. The Director or his/her designee will acknowledge the employee, in writing, for providing excellent service.

Figure 1

### San Mateo County Human Services Agency 11/4/1999



### San Mateo County Human Services Agency 3/14/2000



## OUTCOME-BASED BUDGETING

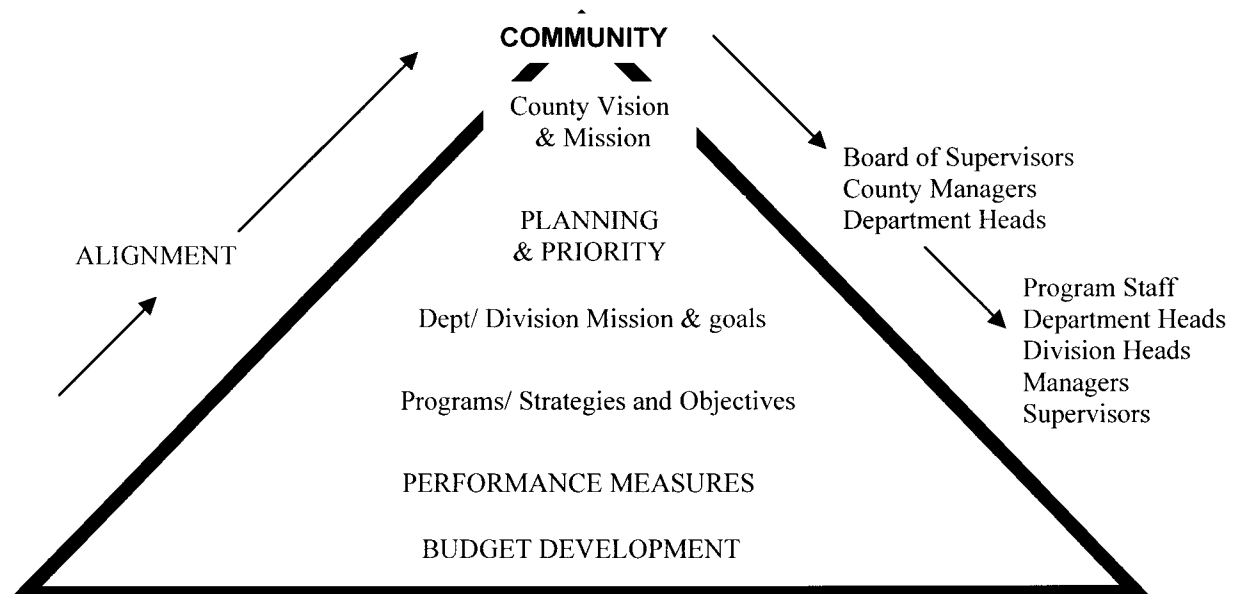
Outcome-Based Management is a form of management that integrates the following in order to focus available resources toward specific outcomes: 1) Planning and Priority-Setting, 2) Performance Measurement, and 3) Budget Development. In December 1999, staff from the Human Services Agency and County Manager's Office attended an all-day retreat. The purpose of the retreat was to develop a roadmap for implementation of the pilot outcome-based management and budgeting process that was 1) understandable, accepted and supported, 2) meets Recommended Budget deadlines, and 3) addresses workload, resources and other issues.

For FY 2000-01, the Human Services Agency piloted Alcohol and Drug Services, with a plan for the entire agency to become outcome-based within the next 2-3 years. The role the Office of Planning and Development has in the implementation of the outcome-based management has been a crucial one. Along with the Director of Finance, the Director of Planning and Development has been taking on the

management of the outcome-based management project for the Alcohol and Drug Services. In addition, the Director of Planning and Development has also been instrumental in developing a useful planning and evaluation methodology that could help facilitate a smooth transition from the pilot project to full agency implementation.

## YEAR 2000 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Year 2000 Strategic Plan (aka the Plan) builds on the 1992 Human Services Strategic Plan and the 1999 Status Report on the Human Services Strategic Plan. This Plan was developed in the context of other planning initiatives in the county. It intends to provide a link between many different efforts (e.g., the Board of Supervisors' "visioning process", the county's "Civic Engagement Initiative" and a blueprint for coordinated action). There are also a variety of collaborative planning processes underway that target specific issues or populations (e.g., children, seniors, child care, housing, transportation, special populations).



Outcome-Based Management Framework—County of San Mateo (OBM Meeting on 12-15-1999, at Redwood City)

Staff to the Oversight Committee for this planning process was from both the Human Services Agency and the Housing Authority. In the Human Services Agency, staff are from the Office of Planning and Development.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY TEAM**

Started in January 2000, the Human Resources Policy Team at the San Mateo County Human Service Agency is implementing the recommendations made by the BASSC Human Resources Committee for the Bay Area Social Services Consortium. A summary of these recommendations is outlined in a paper entitled "Management and Human Resources as Partners in Creating a Learning Organization" (January 1999).

The Director of Planning and Development chairs both the BASSC Human Resources Committee and the Human Resources Policy Team. As a policy director for the Human Resources Committee, her role includes 1) facilitating meetings, 2) communicating expectations, 3) providing advice and counsel, and 4) sharing information with the committee that will provide a "global/big picture" perspective. Team members are recruited from all levels of staff, departments and/or areas.

The goal of the Human Resources Policy Team is to create a Human Resource Development system for the Human Services Agency by

1. designing a career development program that addresses recruitment and retention issues, succession planning, training/learning and career planning,
2. overseeing the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Learning Organization paper, and

3. overseeing a job analysis project which will include updating job descriptions, responsibilities and expectations.

### **MAJOR SUCCESSES AND DIFFICULTIES**

In reviewing my understanding of the Office of Planning and Development, there are a few observable themes as well as general successes and difficulties.

#### **A "Strategically Positioned" Agency**

The San Mateo County Human Services Agency has well positioned itself for the future direction of governmental accountability by strategically organizing the units within its Office of Planning and Development to maximize their coordination and collaboration. All the critical components for successful client services (customer service, outcome-based management, strategic planning and human resources policy) are structurally under this same office. Not only do they depend on each other for service integration and successes, they will also probably be heavily driven by the same research, evaluation and planning methodology of the other units within this same office.

#### **The Presence of a "Start Up Mentality"**

The Director of Planning and Development has been successful in defining the role of her office in keeping with the agency's overall direction. One of her strategies has been to over-extend herself in new major initiatives within the agency in order to give them a solid jump-start. For example, for the Outcome-Based Management project, she and her staff contributed an enormous amount of time and effort to ensure this pilot's successful transition into a full-scale agency implementation. Her other strat-

egy has been to encourage creativity within her office by having an open door policy and an almost flat organizational structure.

### **Developing a “Scalable Service Model”**

As the Office of Planning and Development tackles major components of its function, namely customer service, outcome-based management, strategic planning and human resources policy development, it will be very interesting to follow the office's efforts to implement during the next phase. With its newly expanded resources, can it ensure that the agency's organizational development and strategic planning is integrated into its agency's planning and evaluation activities? What strategies will it use to link these projects internally, and how does it plan to move these projects from planning into agency-wide implementation?

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR SANTA CLARA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY**

The Santa Clara County Social Services Agency could benefit from the San Mateo County Human Services Agency's model by considering the following recommendations:

1. Place a priority on the premise that organizational development and strategic planning need to be integrated into the agency's planning and evaluation activities.
2. Employ strategies that would ensure every employee's understanding of the agency's as well as their department's mission.
3. Implement a periodic all staff survey as a tool to improve staff retention/support and customer service.