



FY2022

Deputy County Manager

Work and Performance Plan

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Consolidated Health and Human Services

Key Initiative 1 – Reducing Racial Disparities, Health Disparities and Community Violence

Description:

During the FY2021 budget process, the BOCC specifically requested the County increase access to and reduce racial disparities and implement efforts to reduce and prevent violence. Areas of focus include food insecurity, health care and increase services hours at County clinics, investing in scholarships and workforce training for public health workers.

Efforts include collaboration between Mecklenburg County Public Health, the City of Charlotte, Atrium Health (Mecklenburg County's Level 1 trauma center), and community partners to develop and implement plans to address health disparities, social determinants of health and address community violence and community safety.

Rationale:

While Mecklenburg County residents have enjoyed improvements in many health indicators, it is well understood that good health is not equally within reach for all demographic groups. Persistent health disparities exist, particularly among African Americans and LatinX/Hispanic communities who experience lower life expectancies compared to White residents. These disparities are exhibited in chronic diseases, maternal/child health outcomes and violence. The root causes of these disparities, or social determinants of health, are found in differences in how the places that we live, learn, work, play and worship make good health easy to achieve. To adequately address and eliminate health disparities, the County must look holistically at these areas and understand how to address them.

Key priorities identified in Mecklenburg County's Community Health Assessment are improving access to care, chronic disease prevention and violence prevention. Health equity and social determinants of health are considered overarching concerns and a part of each of these priorities.

Locally and nationally chronic diseases, such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease, are the leading causes of disability and premature deaths. These conditions disproportionately impact African American and LatinX/Hispanic communities. In Mecklenburg County, the prevalence of chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and obesity is as much as three times higher among African Americans compared to White residents.

Despite disparities in chronic health conditions, access to care among these same communities is lower. African Americans are nearly 2 times more likely to be uninsured or avoid care due to cost compared to Whites in Mecklenburg County. In addition, 1 in 5 mothers in Mecklenburg report inadequate levels of prenatal care. African American infants are 2 times more likely to be born prematurely. African American infants are 5 times more likely to die during their first year of life than are White infants. The current ability to fully assess the social determinants that impact maternal, birth and infant outcomes is very limited.

One of these social determinants that impact our community disproportionately and impacts the health of the community is food insecurity. Food security is defined as a household's ability to access nutritious foods, which contributes to active and healthy life through physical, social, and economic means. In 2018, an estimated 14.9% of Mecklenburg County households reported experiencing food insecurity. Rates of food insecurity are even higher in the six Public Health Priority Zip Codes, who also experience lower median incomes, lower access to grocery stores or supermarkets and are more likely to receive nutrition assistance.

Increasing access to healthy food is not just a means for reaching improved health outcomes. Equally as important are the accompanying economic benefits—ranging from new jobs, wages, and tax revenues, to stimulating local economic activity and social cohesion in neighborhoods. (PolicyLink, 2013).

Homicide rates in Mecklenburg have continued to increase over the past 4 years. Exposure to violence can negatively impact individuals in a variety of ways. The number of homicides and other violent acts in Mecklenburg continues to increase, resulting in the need for a more comprehensive approach to violence prevention and community safety. Violence is considered a public health crisis.

Approaching violence as a public health issue means searching for the root causes of this epidemic and using data, tools, and evidence-informed best practices to address those causes. Communities across the US are encouraged to implement evidence-based programs and to evaluate the program's success. Dissemination techniques to promote widespread adoption include training, networking, technical assistance, and evaluation.

Ensuring every resident has equal access to safety, healthy food, affordable care, preventive health services and resources to maintain a healthy life is essential to addressing the persisting racial and health disparities in our community. The need to include input from residents is key to addressing all of these issues and making improvements in health disparities and health outcomes.

Completion Date:

This initiative is ongoing. (The updates or milestones below will be completed during FY22.)

Updates/Project Milestones:

Health Disparities

1. Build additional capacity to assess maternal health, birth and infant outcomes in Mecklenburg County, including identification of new data and ongoing analysis.
2. Establish a Collective Impact approach to identify social determinants of health that influence health disparities and aligns Community Health Worker (CHW) efforts across the County to collectively meet those needs. MCPH will serve as the backbone organization to this approach, working with all entities engaged in CHW efforts including the Healthcare systems, nonprofits and faith-based organizations.
3. Implement CHW initiative focused on MCH/pregnant women/new moms, working with non-profit organizations to address key initiatives around improvements in maternal/child health outcomes.
4. Continue implementation of strategies for chronic disease prevention and management through the Village HeartBEAT program, including continued expansions for at least 15 hub churches.
5. Increase access to accurate information to inform decisions and thereby improve the health of the community. This involves having a science-based strategic communication process as defined by the National Association of City and County Health Organization and the CDC which includes using multiple behavioral and social learning theories and models, then identifying steps to influence audience attitudes and behavior.

Food Security

1. Continue to research and explore new options for food retail to address food security within the County.
2. Continue to monitor changing demographics and needs within the crescent, define issues and, develop specific strategies to address food security in appropriate locations within the County

Community Safety

1. Partner with the City of Charlotte to implement a Cure Violence Model to reduce violent behavior in the Pilot area. The Cure Violence Model includes community assessment, community engagement, identifying community partners and setting up the model for implementation.
2. Expand analyses of available data and incorporate datasets into public dashboard in partnership with the City of Charlotte. Data can be obtained from police reports, medical examiner files, vital records, hospital charts, registries, population-based surveys, and other sources.
3. Continue engaging community partners, including community members, law enforcement, criminal justice, local universities, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations in the development of a comprehensive plan to address community safety:
 - a. Understand the current available resources (data, programs, initiatives, etc.)
 - b. Identity the current gaps in resources and possible solutions.
 - c. Work with community partners and community members to understand the risk factors that are present in the county.
 - d. Research literature and data from research, community needs assessments, community surveys, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups to design prevention programs.
 - e. Create, alongside the community, an advocacy plan focused on community safety.
4. Continue ReCAST efforts to address trauma and resilience in the community, including
 - a. Training opportunities
 - b. Faith-based Healing Hubs
 - c. Youth-based Hubs Pilots

Outcomes/Measures:

Successful completion of project milestones.

Key Initiative 2 – Early Childhood Education/Meck Pre-K

Description:

Foster equal opportunity among children to learn, grow and thrive, as well as to promote economic opportunity regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or income. The Early Childhood Education initiative is an important focus for the County as it fosters economic mobility and prepares children to learn and be ready to succeed upon school entry.

Rationale:

For many households, childcare serves as an early learning program for the child while also helping parents participate fully in the workforce. This makes the provision of childcare assistance a two-generation strategy: supporting children's early education and economic opportunity for the family through parents' engagement in the workforce.

The goal of the Early Childhood Education initiative is for the County to provide effective leadership, management, and advisory support for the County's third year of MECK Pre-K implementation and identify strategies to support the development of children from prenatal through age five.

Completion Date:

June 2022

Updates/Project Milestones:

- Increase Meck Pre-K programming by adding 16 classrooms for a total of 105 operational county-funded Meck Pre-K classrooms.
- Complete a parental to age three landscape analysis and develop actionable recommendations to allocate resources to improve outcomes for children and their families.
- Contract with a consultant for a Meck Pre-K program evaluation and SWOT analysis to prepare for future expansion.
- Finalize and implement the Meck Pre-K enhanced online management system which will include integrated invoicing capabilities along with enhanced eligibility and student management functionality.
- Partner with Child Care Resources Inc. to monitor state and county childcare subsidy funding to prevent overspending and ensure the maximum number of children are served by available funding.

Outcomes/Measures:

End of Year Reporting.

Key Initiative 3 – COVID-19 – American Rescue Plan Act, Recovery & Renewal Taskforce Recommendations, and Consultant Evaluation

Description:

Actively support the County Manager and provide leadership for the County's internal response to COVID-19 by focusing three sub-key initiatives:

- Identification of outcomes to achieve utilizing the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 \$350 billion in emergency funding for eligible state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments.
- Implement the recommendations from the Recovery & Renewal Taskforce
- Manage the contract with the evaluation consultant to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the County's response to the COVID-19 crisis.

In addition to the aforementioned new items for the COVID-19 initiative, Mecklenburg County must continue to safely provide and expand County services to the public, maintain critical County business needs through operational planning and policy, and address community needs.

Rationale:

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

On May 10, 2021, the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced the launch of the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, established by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021, to provide \$350 billion in emergency funding for eligible state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments.

Mecklenburg County will receive a total of \$215 million from the ARPA plan in two equal installments. The first tranche was received in the amount of \$107.5M and the second tranche of the remaining \$107.5M will be received in 2022. The current public health crisis and resulting economic crisis have devastated the health and economic wellbeing of Mecklenburg County residents. Individuals and families are facing a deep economic crisis. Several residents have lost their jobs and businesses have closed their doors because of the pandemic.

Below are the four broad statutory eligible uses for the ARPA funding:

- Respond to public health emergency and its negative impacts
- Provide premium pay to essential workers
- Replace public sector revenue loss
- Investments in necessary water, sewer, and broad band infrastructure

Recovery & Renewal Taskforce Recommendations

In June 2020, the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners adopted a resolution creating the Recovery & Renewal Taskforce. Since 2020, the Taskforce has diligently worked to examine and help address COVID-19 impact issues specific to employees, businesses, public health, education, the economy, and the overall well-being of the Mecklenburg County residents. In summer 2021, the Taskforce concluded its work and is prepared to share recommendations to the BOCC in September 2021. Once a set of recommendations are accepted by the BOCC, the County will identify ways to implement and respond to the recommendations.

Consultant Evaluation

In early 2021, the County began the process to identify and select a consultant to conduct an evaluation of the County's response to the current COVID-19 pandemic and assist in creating recommendations to

support long-term pandemic planning for the County. The evaluation is aligned to the County Manager's Office Strategic Business Plan.

Hagerty Consulting, LLC was selected as the consultant and a contract was executed in July 2021 with work planned to commence in August 2021. The goals for the consultant are to perform an assessment on the County's response regarding the following:

- Equipment distribution
- Policymaking
- Service Delivery
- Employee Impacts
- Customer impacts
- Partner engagements (MEDIC, Emergency Operations Center, Joint Information Center, the towns within the County)

Timeline:

This initiative is ongoing.

ARPA: The period of performance is March 3, 2021 through December 31, 2026. The funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and expended by December 31, 2026.

Taskforce Recommendations: The period of identifying and responding to the set of recommendations is in FY2022 with ongoing response.

Consultant Evaluation: Completion in summer 2022.

Updates/Project Milestones:

ARPA

- Development of a strategic business plan that outlines how the ARPA funds will be invested into the community
- Engage residents and the business community for feedback on areas that require investment
- Develop a communication strategy to promote awareness of the ARPA funds
- Design an internal process for receiving funding proposals
- Monitor the performance and outcomes of investments
- Provide routine updates to the Board of County Commissioners
- Provide reporting to the US Department of Treasury
- Successfully spend the entire amount of the ARPA funds
- Create the infrastructure needed to ensure compliance with federal rules

Taskforce Recommendations

- Finalize recommendations for the BOCC
- Create an implementation strategy
- Track and monitor the activity on a quarterly basis and report outcomes to the BOCC

Consultant Evaluation

- Manage the contract between the County and consultant to ensure timely and efficient delivery of consulting services with the goal for the consultant to deliver an initial set of findings and recommendations as well as final recommendations to County leadership

Outcomes/Measures:

Successful completion of all project milestones.

Key Initiative 4 – Managed Care Organization Realignment

Description:

Mecklenburg County is realigning with a new Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO) which provides publicly-funded behavioral health services under the direction of NCDHHS.

NCDHHS approved Mecklenburg County's request to realign with Alliance Health from, Cardinal Innovations, the County's previous LME/MCO. Alliance will assume responsibility as LME/MCO for Mecklenburg County by Dec. 15, 2021, according to a timetable established by NCDHHS.

LME/MCOs manage behavioral health (including mental health and substance use disorder) and intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD) services for residents who are insured by Medicaid or who have no health insurance. Alliance currently manages these services for residents in Durham, Wake, Cumberland and Johnston counties. Orange County will also be transitioning from Cardinal to Alliance.

Rationale:

On June 1, 2021, the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) voted unanimously (with one abstention) to disengage from Cardinal Innovations Healthcare and realign with Alliance Health. This vote came after many years of efforts by Mecklenburg County staff and community stakeholders to address systemic issues related to Cardinal's oversight of behavioral health services.

It is the intent of Mecklenburg County, working in partnership with Alliance Health and NCDHHS, to ensure an effective transition and prevent any disruption in services for community members and providers.

Completion Date:

FY22

Updates/Project Milestones:

- Partner with the LME/MCO during and following the realignment process regarding network adequacy, timely authorization/approval, and access to services while identifying any service gaps and unmet needs that impact residents.
- Develop and implement a communication plan to keep consumers, families, providers, and advocates informed about the realignment process.
- Engage community partners, consumers, and other stakeholders through work-group meetings, listening sessions, and townhalls to maximize their input during the realignment process.
- Respond to the breadth and scope of changes during realignment by providing input and solutions to the County Manager to address the behavioral health needs of our residents.
- Assess federal recovery dollars and provide solutions/recommendations to the County Manager regarding how they may further the county's strategic behavioral health goals to address more timely placements, behavioral health services, and community-based wrap around supports for residents of Mecklenburg County.

Outcomes/Measures:

Successful completion of the aforementioned tasks.

Key Initiative 5 – Health and Human Services Integration

Description:

Health and Human Services (HHS) Integration seeks to better coordinate service delivery across Mecklenburg County's Consolidated Human Services Agency which includes the Department of Community Resources (DCR), Community Support Services (CSS), Department of Social Services (DSS) and Public Health (PH). HHS Integration will be achieved by:

- Connecting data software systems across HHS departments to help customers receive information and/or referrals for needed services regardless of which HHS department they first interact with.
- Fully expanding usage of the Single View of the Customer technology platform that streamlines HHS programming to help customers easily access services.
- Ensuring Mecklenburg County residents can receive HHS services as close to their homes as possible through Community Resource Centers.

Rationale:

Many residents receive services from multiple HHS departments, but efficient coordination of these services is difficult because of operational, policy and technology constraints.

HHS Integration takes a broader look at how the HHS Agency can be best organized to serve Mecklenburg County residents. HHS Integration is important because the initiative will:

- Enhance collaboration across HHS departments to offer programs and services in a more coordinated and comprehensive manner.
- Expand the functionality of the Single View of the Customer technology platform to improve customer experience when seeking or receiving services across HHS departments.
- Help HHS customers have a clearer path to independence and stability through greater access to HHS benefits and programs.

Completion Date:

This is a multi-year plan with the completion date yet to be determined. (The updates or milestones below will be completed during FY22.)

Updates/Project Milestones:

- Revise the Community Resource Center governance charter to ensure appropriate staffing levels and performance expectations for each HHS department.
- Develop and implement standardized integrated Health & Human Services policies and procedures designed to holistically assess customer needs across CSS, DCR, DSS and PH.
- Develop and implement a project plan for the full implementation of the Single View of the Customer and NCCARE 360.
- Develop a communication strategy outlining how HHS Integration will affect each HHS department, specifically the implications for staff and customers.
- Create and utilize a survey tool to assess staff understanding of HHS integration.

Outcomes/Measures:

End of Year Reporting

Key Initiative 6 – Community Resource Centers

Description:

Develop program implementation and provide recommendations for future Community Resource Centers (CRCs) based on initial prototype.

Rationale:

In 2015, the County kicked-off an HHS Integration Initiative under the Bringing Mecklenburg County to You (BMC2U) project. The primary objective of this Initiative is to develop, implement and refine a comprehensive, integrated Health & Human Services business model that encompasses programs currently administered by Community Support Services (CSS), Child Support Services (CSE), Department of Social Services (DSS), Public Health (PH), and targeted community partners.

The initiative proposed a system of “Community Resource Centers” that provide a continuum of County and community partner services at a single location, expanding access to services across the County and meeting customers where they are. The prototype Community Resource Center opened at 3205 Freedom Drive in June 2018. Based upon the success of the prototype, Mecklenburg County has begun preparing for the expansion of the Community Resource Center (CRC) model to additional locations.

Completion Date:

This is a multi-year plan. (The updates or milestones below will be completed during FY22.)

Updates/Project Milestones:

- Design, develop, and implement a comprehensive Social Determinants of Health internal and external community referral and service delivery plan to meet the transactional and outcomes-based needs of our residents
- In partnership with HHS Departmental Leadership and CRC Project Team, lead development of a phased opening plan for CRC 2, 3 & 4 to include County and Community Partner programs and services, business process design and workflow, staffing, plan and projected budget
- In partnership with Public Information and Community Partners, develop and implement a comprehensive phased internal and external communication plan to gain input and ensure awareness of the CRC virtual and in-person service plan, opening dates and locations

Outcomes/Measures:

Successful completion of the aforementioned tasks.

Key Initiative 7 – Improvement of Homeless Response Systems

Description:

The County seeks to create innovative programming across our community's housing continuum to reduce the number of households experiencing homelessness, improve access to the homeless services system, and ensure the stability of households transitioning from homelessness to housing. Providing this leadership positively impacts outcomes for vulnerable populations experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness throughout the community.

Rationale:

Along with the health and economic impact of COVID-19, there was a 55% increase in overall homelessness and an increase in the length of time people experienced homelessness during FY21. Homelessness and the lack of affordable housing requires a community-wide strategic response.

At the onset of COVID-19, the County and community homeless shelters partnered to open hotels as non-congregate emergency shelter options to allow for social distancing. This included opening an 80-room hotel serving specifically as emergency shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness who are 60 years of age or older with underlying medical conditions.

In order to increase the long-term availability of affordable housing, a plan will be developed and implemented for purchasing and upfitting a hotel to serve as permanent housing for individuals experiencing homelessness. The hotel will also provide housing for individuals with criminal justice system involvement and limited housing resources.

In addition to affordable housing efforts, the County will develop and implement a plan to create the Connections Center, a new day-services center for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Completion Date:

This is a multi-year plan with the completion date yet to be determined.

Updates/Project Milestones

- Provide direct leadership and oversight of encampment hotel transition that includes:
 - Partnering with housing providers to create connections to permanent supportive housing.
 - Partnering with Mecklenburg County's Criminal Justice Services to expand a transitional housing program for eligible guests.
 - Providing incentives to landlords for timely housing placement.
- Partner with the County's Asset and Facility Management department to explore the feasibility of creating and expanding access to permanent supportive housing through the purchase and conversion of area motels.
- Partner with Asset and Facility Management department to explore the feasibility of opening a day services center for households experiencing homelessness or who are housing insecure. If feasible and approved, identify a center operator through a Request for Proposal process.
- Assess current community resources, identify gaps, and develop a comprehensive strategy to support and house people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Mecklenburg County.

Outcomes/Measures:

End of Year Reporting

Key Initiative 8 -- Equity and Inclusion Initiative

Description:

Continue implementation of the County's Equity Action Plan.

Rationale:

To address the challenge for Mecklenburg County to become a stronger pro-equity organization, strategies must be implemented and enforced that enhance the work Mecklenburg County has already completed to promote equity and inclusion. The County has partnered with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) to create both a racial equity training curriculum for County staff, an Equity Action Toolkit and a three-year Equity Action Plan. To continue to build the capacity of the organization, it is critical that the County continues the implementation of action items identified in the Equity Action Plan.

Completion Date:

This is a multi-year project.

Updates/Project Milestones:

- Ensure that all (95%-100%) employees have completed the county-wide Advancing Racial Equity Training
- Develop a Department Equity Action Plan
- Identify performance data needs and ensure mechanisms are in place to track and collect crucial data
- Establish an annual accountability agreement in alignment with annual workplan
- Completion of training on the approved Customized Racial Equity Toolkit by Mid-Senior Management to use the tool with policies and programs
- All staff of current and future CRCs will participate in Implicit Bias and Trauma Informed Training
- Continue to review and include health data for future CRC service provisions. Include Public Health in pre-planning phase for space recommendations for future CRCs.
- In collaboration with the Health & Health Equity Workgroup and the Office of Equity & Inclusion, explore partnerships for comprehensive Reproductive Life Planning within community
- In collaboration with the Health & Health Equity Workgroup and the Office of Equity & Inclusion, seek opportunities to better communicate options for those with limited transportation to ensure pre-natal care access is provided

Outcomes/Measures:

Successful completion of the aforementioned tasks.

Key Initiative 9 – MeckWorks

Description:

Mecklenburg County's MeckWorks initiative is focused on improving job skills and employment prospects for County residents facing barriers to employment or entering the job market with limited education and training. This initiative leverages activities offered through the Unified Workforce Development Program and partnerships with other workforce development vendors such as Charlotte Works and Urban League of Central Carolinas. By preparing job-seekers for today's workforce, we will bridge the gap between employers seeking qualified job candidates and job candidates seeking sustainable living wage employment.

Rationale:

While job opportunities are increasing in Mecklenburg County, some job seekers still find it difficult to access employment that provides a sustainable living-wage. The MeckWorks initiative is designed to improve economic mobility among unemployed and underemployed residents by linking them with short-term vocational training opportunities, supportive services, targeted job development in fields of client interest, employment placement, job retention services, and job-to-career coaching.

In FY22, the MeckWorks initiative will expand the population it serves to include two groups with an increasing need for upskilling and supportive services: first-time job seekers, including graduating high school students, and women whose workforce participation was disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Completion Date:

This is a multi-year plan with the completion date yet to be determined. (The updates or milestones below will be completed during FY22.)

Updates/Project Milestones:

- Coordinate with other programs and services such as Central Piedmont Community College and the MeckSuccess program to provide unemployed and underemployed residents with training opportunities, wraparound services, and career coaching that will increase access to employment and upward mobility
- In partnership with the Mecklenburg County Employer Engagement Team, support employed customers in retaining a job through educational advancement, individualized coaching, employer engagement, and community resources
- Oversee the progress of the 215 participants enrolled in the Meck Works program through Charlotte Works to ensure vendor meets performance outcomes including: participants earning credentials for high demand fields; training-related employment placement; supportive services, and job retention
- Monitor performance of Urban League's Women's Exclusive Workforce Training Program in increasing women's access to sustainable employment through skills training, professional development opportunities, and job placement

Outcomes/Measures:

Successful completion of the aforementioned tasks.

Key Initiative 10 – Workforce Development

Description:

The link between jobseekers and employers is created through various avenues. These avenues include: Employer Websites, Workforce Providers, Headhunters and Recruiters, Referrals, Job Boards and Career Websites, Job Fairs, Cold Calling, Staffing Agencies, or Internships. Considering every employer and jobseeker are different, multiple strategies are employed in our community which can be confusing to the job seeker and frustrating to the employer seeking qualified applicants. This initiative will focus on bridging the gap between employers seeking qualified job candidates and job candidates seeking sustainable livable wage employment by assessing the current defined pathways and recommending a solution to streamline the process.

Rationale:

While job opportunities are increasing in Mecklenburg County, some job seekers still find it difficult to access available opportunities that provide a sustainable living-wage. Concurrently, local employers report a lack of available, qualified job candidates to fill job openings.

Completion Date:

June 2022

Updates/Project Milestones:

Identify a Workforce Development consultant to complete the following tasks:

- Complete an assessment of the existing pathways used to connect employers and job seekers.
 - Partner with the HIRE Charlotte Initiative, Lake Norman Economic Development Corporation and Charlotte Executive Leadership Council to understand local employment pathways and barriers.
 - Partner with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Central Piedmont Community College to understand current employment initiatives and barriers to student placements.
 - Leverage existing research and strategies to identify national best practices to improve employment outcomes for students, job seekers and employers.
- Recommend to the Board of County Commissioners an array of solutions that are complementary and supportive of other workforce initiatives.

Outcomes/Measures:

Successful completion of the aforementioned tasks.