



# WARREN COUNTY

Information Technology

— COMMUNITIES OF CHOICE —

## **STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGY PLAN**

TYING OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES TO I.T. INITIATIVES

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## PURPOSE OF PLAN

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The purpose of Strategic Planning is to provide an understanding of the BIG PICTURE while providing FOCUS for WHAT'S IMPORTANT. This ensures that we know what our projects are and why we're undertaking them. This does not take away from the day-to-day needs that are more urgent in nature.

There is no better way to ensure the effectiveness of our organization. Aligning our projects with the goals of the organization will ensure the end results attain important objectives for Warren County and its citizens.

The on-going process used to develop this plan includes a review of the past Strategic Plan and brainstorming sessions with multiple department heads and staff. Taking into account the existing accomplishments of Warren County in the areas of Technology projects, future direction was developed as collaboration between, staff, department heads and the IT department. The WISC committee reviewed the plan and added notes as needed. Although some issues raised were operations related our intent was to provide a direction for the Information Technology Department only. In most cases a Strategic Plan is completed for the organization prior to individual departments, this is not the case for Warren County and the results may reflect that issue.

This plan should be considered a three-five year plan that will change from year to year as emerging issues arise and new technological solutions become available.

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## OVERVIEW

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WARREN COUNTY provides services to a wide range of citizens and their needs. Warren County ranks as 13<sup>th</sup> in population within the state of Iowa. The county runs very efficiently compared with other counties.

Warren County Information Technology mission: **To provide public services to the citizens of Warren County in the most efficient and effective manner possible with the resources that are available.**  
(Developed by Information Technology Department Strategic Planning Process)

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## WHERE IS THE COUNTY TODAY?

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Warren County has undergone a number of changes in the Information Technology Department in the past few years. In the past few years, there has been a massive redesign of the network to create a reliable and high performing network platform. Standards have been developed around leading technology vendors in their area ensuring some level of investment protection.

- High-speed Internet (two megabit with MCG)
- Geographic Information System
  - ESRI Software with SQL Server backend
- Exchange e-Mail and calendar
- e-Government Initiatives
  - Treasurer Property Tax Payments, GetMyTags
  - Recorder Land Records on-line
  - Assessor Geographic Information System on-line

- Office Automation
  - Health Services CareFacts Charting and Billing
  - Hommed Stations in homes for reporting
- Broader based deployment of document imaging
  - Added Auditor, Sheriff, County Attorney, Health Services and Substance Abuse offices
- Voice over IP Phone System
  - Phone System in Courthouse reduces costs increases services
  - Phasing in VoIP phones in administration building
- Virtualized Servers and Storage Area Network
  - Provides better management of hardware investment
  - Increase reliability through fail-over
  - Increase scalability
  - Less hardware costs

With changes to the network infrastructure, the county is solidly positioned for future needs as they arise. A number of standards have been set for increased reliability, interoperability, management and expandability. Initial projects focused on providing a reliable and high-performing network infrastructure. Subsequent projects are focused on scalability of the infrastructure and providing solutions to office efficiency.

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#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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The following is a brief summary of our recommendations for Warren County strategic information technology directions. Details regarding needed directions and reasoning for those initiatives follows.

- **Government that is efficient.** With the resources available, Warren County must pursue opportunities for efficiency. Eliminating redundant processes while maintaining checks and balances is an excellent way to reduce staff time and find ways to “do more with less”.
- **Government that is effective.** Warren County is made up of many different departments that meet the various needs of its citizens. Whether it is public safety, public health, public records or any of the other many services provided to the public by county government; Warren County projects need to meet the needs of the citizens of Warren County and the commercial organizations.
- **Government that is accountable.** Consumers and commercial organizations have embraced the Internet as a vehicle for electronic commerce and valuable source for information.

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#### MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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- **Continue to make e-Government via the Internet a County Priority.** Consumers and commercial organizations have embraced the Internet as a vehicle for electronic commerce and valuable source for information. Many Warren County residents commute to Des Moines. This causes a hardship for citizens to complete county business during business hours. E-Government is a stated priority and a critical success factor for all future information systems development efforts. Some departments are now updating their own content but more direct interaction with citizens via automated or web processes should be encouraged.

- **Assist Departments in Developing Streamlined Workflow Processes.** Work with departments to automate their internal processes. Many departments continue to rely on essentially manual processes for their office operations.
- **Staff Information Technology Department According to the Needs of the County.** Based on similar sized counties, current workload of existing staff and future needs of the county should increase the staff to four full-time equivalents (FTE) including a full-time web/application developer. Staffing the Information Technology Department appropriately provides valuable resources to the county to become more effective and efficient.
- **Update Business Continuity (Disaster Recovery) Plans.** To ensure the continuity of county government in the event of an emergency, written plans should be in place and kept updated for any foreseeable contingency. Single points of failure should be minimized. Example: Power outages in the Admin building create a significant risk to continued operations of the county without a backup power source.
- **Continue to expand the use of existing technology for other Departments.**
- **Continue with funding regular Replacement Cycle for Technology.** Rapidly advancing computer technology has reduced the effective lifespan of PC workstations and laptops to no more than 5 years. Beyond that, the performance needs of the operating systems and popular applications overwhelm older equipment. Servers or other pieces of equipment also need to be included in a regular plan for replacement.
- **Need to Fund Security related Technology on a regular basis.** Security threats have evolved dramatically in the past few years. Financially motivated experts are breaching security perimeters with phishing, polymorphic worms, Spyware and bots have created the need for adaptive technology with a layered approach to security. As the threats change, so must our defenses to those threats.
- **Disaster Recovery, Fail-Over and Maintenance.** We have recently installed a Storage Area Network and Virtual Server technology for consolidating our disk storage and processing needs. This also allows us to configure the servers to fail-over to a different physical server if a physical server fails. This will reduce downtime and negative effects related to scheduled maintenance. This continues our philosophy of elimination of single points of failure while being extremely efficient in our use of resources.

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## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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A list of goals for the County in general and Information Technology Department specifically:

1. **Maintain critical county services for department.** As technology has become an integral tool in the delivery of services in county government, we must ensure that continuity of government services. A plan must be maintained which provides for quick response to critical services restoration to normal operations.
2. **Assist in initiatives that promote economic development and make it easier to do business in and with Warren County.** Technology offers an opportunity to eliminate barriers

and create efficient workflow. As a county we add value when we assist in eliminating those barriers and make doing business with Warren County more efficient.

3. **Facilitate Communication with the Public.** With the advent of computers we have unprecedented tools available to us to provide information to the public in understandable formats. We should continue to understand the tools we have available to us and seek additional tools that provide the highest grade of services that meet the expectations of our citizens.
4. **Continue to Increase Accessibility and Services to the Public.** The 24 hours a day world of business and the Internet pushes the County to work with the public on their hours versus ours. E-Mail, computers and websites will allow the County to work with the public 24 hours a day while still maintaining lower costs. We should continue to add features that allow the public to interact with county departments and access to public records.
5. **Facilitate the Increase of Accountability to the Public.** Increasing effectiveness and efficiency in delivering county services to the taxpaying citizen ensures our role of being good stewards of taxpayer dollars. We must create opportunities for these initiatives and report on their results.

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#### IMPACTING PERFORMANCE

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Ways in which Information Technology Department can impact performance for the County.

1. Analyze and streamline processes within I.T. Department
2. Assist departments in analyzing and streamlining workflow within individual departments and between departments
3. Increase communication between departments, other governmental offices and citizens creating opportunities for collaboration
4. Develop training for county employees to more effectively use the technology tools currently available
5. Seek out, define and implement new technology tools to meet the needs of all county offices
6. Shift citizen information access from people based processes to 24x7 accessibility via the Internet
7. Develop automated processes for citizen self-serve via web-based e-government initiatives

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#### INEFFICIENT PROCESSES

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What areas do our processes seem to be inefficient with regards to internal staff or our citizens?

1. Election results

2. Building Permit Process – Requires involvement from a number of departments whose current interaction is paper based and time consuming between steps in process.
3. Communication with State agencies for reporting or gathering information
4. Redundant processes for claims and case management for Mental Health
5. Duplication of effort in Engineer and Auditor offices as it relates to claims and payroll processing
6. Mostly manual Inventory control for Secondary Roads
7. Updating the county website and using it to make E-Government a priority
8. Computer power outages – no contingency plan or process in case of outage for individual departments to continue their work

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### **ADDITIONAL SERVICES OR INCREASE IN QUALITY**

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What would we do if we had additional time to accomplish? What would the public like from us if we could?

1. Increase services available via website; public information, public records
2. Access to Courts to see orders for Mental Health cases
3. Increase interdepartmental knowledge of county services
4. Greater search ability on website
5. An online work order (complaint) system for customers to use

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### **COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION**

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In what ways can or do we share processes, resources, customers, etc to accomplish our functions?

1. Work with State of Iowa for data sharing standards
2. All new policies or ordinances should be e-mailed to department heads

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### **CURRENT PROJECTS DEFINED**

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1. Complete Emergency Operations Center and Standard Operating Procedures for setup

2. Power Generator for administration building critical services
3. Complete County Attorney Case Management software
4. Website integration with county data (financial, public records, public interest)
5. Complete website content management for department control of content on website

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## **DEFINING SUCCESS**

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Ways in which Information Technology Department can define the success of its initiatives?

1. Cost savings over previous processes
2. Workload to staffing ratio improvements (transactions per office, etc.)
3. Improved customer service
4. Reliability of systems, information and processes

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## **CONSTRAINTS**

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What resources are required to accomplish these initiatives?

1. Staff Time (always have more work available than time)
2. Specific expertise regarding best practices for certain initiatives (training and consulting expertise)
3. Lack of data to develop Return on Investment (ROI) for projects
4. Budget constraints to fund certain projects
5. Politics associated with change or direction changes as political climate changes (local, state and national)
6. Space issues for departments, Emergency Management and Courts (size), Mental Health (separated offices)
7. Lack of standards for interoperability between applications within county offices and standards for sharing information with the state
8. Budget constraints to fund certain projects

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## ADENDUM

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These are other topics that were uncovered by the planning process. Although important ideas, they were not within the scope of Information Technology and are therefore listed here.

- Information phone number – A central number answered during business hours to be routed to the appropriate resource.
- Signs in halls that can be read from down the hall or location of suites – Many people still are unable to find offices based on the current signage. Signs which stand out away from the office and can be read from down the hall would alleviate this issue.
- Services at Directory Level – A list of typical services provided and the office that provides these would help people find the appropriate office. This is currently available on the county website but should be included in all areas where the public is looking for assistance. Examples: Telephone listings, office suite directory in buildings