

Regular Department Progress Meetings

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A. Purpose

This document establishes a process for Commissioners Court staff to regularly monitor and engage with County departments and discuss department objectives and activities, particularly in the context of the Court's adopted strategic direction and budget. These meetings with each department will provide a structured forum for departments to provide key updates, receive staff feedback, and give more advance notice regarding significant changes or upcoming decisions, and for Commissioners Court staff to ask questions and get a clearer understanding of departments' work. Executed well, these conversations can ensure that Commissioners Court ultimately has better and more structured information for making policy, budgetary, and other key decisions.

B. Structure and Approach

Department Progress Meetings (DPMs) will be divided into committees that reflect the Court's adopted strategic direction. These Goal Area Committees (GACs) may include up to three attending representatives from each of the five Commissioners Court offices and should include a liaison from the Office of County Administration (OCA) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for each meeting. The GACs will meet with each of the following departments' leadership on a regular basis (preferably four times per fiscal year), to be determined as outlined in Section C: County Administration (OCA), Domestic Relations (DRO), Economic Equity & Opportunity (DEEO), Engineering (HCED), Fire Marshal (FMO), Flood Control (FCD), Forensic Sciences (IFS), Housing & Community Development (HCDD), Human Resources & Risk Management (HRRM), Intergovernmental & Global Affairs (IGA), Managed Assigned Counsel (MAC), Management & Budget (OMB), Pollution Control (PCS), Pretrial Services (PTS), the Public Defender (PDO), Public Health (HCPH), Public Library (HCPL), the Toll Road Authority (HCTRA), Universal Services (HCUS), and Veterans Services (VSD).

The Goal Area Committees will meet with the departments listed above to conduct reviews of each department's activities, goals, and progress. The number and categorization of GACs should reflect Commissioners Court's adopted strategic direction.

Departments do not formally report to Goal Area Committees but rather inform these committees of their priorities and progress. In addition, departments whose work crosses multiple Goal Areas may meet with more than one Goal Area Committee over the course of a year to ensure that those departments are supporting the County's priorities.

OCA will support these meetings by facilitating discussions, collecting from departments and distributing to committee members the relevant materials for each meeting, and providing a broader perspective as needed. OCA and OMB will also provide budgetary, spending, and—pending provision of information by the relevant department—performance data.

C. Scope of Meetings and Reporting

Committee members, by a majority vote of the membership, will determine the cadence of subsequent regular meetings. The decision regarding meeting cadence will be made in collaboration with departments. Committee meetings may involve multiple departments and discussion of cross-department initiatives and coordination.

Meetings with each department will consist of a review of some or all of the following:

- The department's goals, objectives, strategic plans, work and outcomes associated with the County's strategic direction,
- The department's core functions, associated budget, and staffing, and
- Performance indicators, including their rationale and the latest available data.

Additionally, meetings will include any key program or department updates, and discussion of any upcoming significant changes or decisions that the department is considering, including any changes that may be taken to Commissioners Court for potential approval in the future.

More detailed discussions will take place whenever needed to aid with improved understanding between the Commissioners Court offices and departments. Goal Area Committees can request more detail if necessary to gain a better understanding of how a department's programs and initiatives connect to Commissioners Court's strategic direction and to department objectives and KPIs.

During a given fiscal year, at least one Department Progress Meeting with each department will be calendared concurrent with the County's budget process of to prioritize discussion of the department's budget. These meetings should offer a space for Goal Area Committee review and shared understanding of the department's proposed budget for the next fiscal year in advance of the Court's consideration of the budget. Each meeting will include review of the department's current operating budget (with a department's line-item budget provided by OMB and the department to Court offices at least 14 days in advance), the department's proposed changes/reductions in current operations (if any), and the department's requests for additional funding (if any). The information collected in these committee meetings will serve to support the Commissioners Court's annual budget process.

D. Workflow

1. Chiefs of Staff work with OCA to establish and oversee the Goal Area Committees, including changing which departments are categorized under each GAC as needed.
2. Goal Area Committee members, OCA, and departments maintain (and update as needed) a regular meeting time for the DPMs and the meeting schedule.
3. Department fills out pre-meeting review materials, which may include but is not limited to the materials described in the "Scope of Meetings" section above. OMB prepares the department's budget and spending update. OCA compiles and organizes materials from departments.
4. Review materials are shared with the relevant Goal Area Committee at least one week in advance of a Department Progress Meeting.
5. Regular meetings take place. Any significant policy or other key changes should go to Commissioners Court for consideration and potential approval.
6. Each Goal Area Committee provides semiannual reports to Commissioners Court on the status of and any key updates from these meetings. These reports should demonstrate how the work from departments and the Goal Area Committees help contribute to building toward the Court's adopted strategic direction.

E. Additional Reporting and Meetings

OCA will work with the GACs to limit the duplication of reports that OCA or OMB may be requesting of departments.

Departments may meet separately with Court member offices in different settings. Departments may request a review and reconsideration of *other* meetings to ensure the best use of time and to limit the duplication of effort.

F. Elected and Independently Appointed Offices

To complement these department progress meetings and maximize opportunities for collaboration, each Goal Area Committee may invite elected and independently appointed offices in related subject matter areas to meet at those offices' discretion. Given that these offices are overseen by independently elected or appointed officials, these meetings would be narrower in scope, with a focus on budgetary issues and other topics that may eventually require consideration and potential approval by Commissioners Court.