

APPENDIX C. FIVE STATE STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVES

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Leaders in five states (Colorado, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Vermont) have shared their experiences of strategic planning and their ideas about the strategic planning process. The following is a synthesis of the key points and themes that emerged from interviews with these five states' leaders. These states' experiences may be helpful to you as you pursue strategic planning in your state or organization.

The following questions represent the key information state leaders provided:

- What were the driving forces behind the decision to develop a statewide strategic plan?
- What were your stated goals and objectives for the strategic planning effort?
- Who were the Stakeholders/Key Players involved in organizing and implementing the strategic plan?
- What were some of the processes used in your strategic planning?
- What were some major outcomes of the strategic planning process?
- What evaluation methods are you using for the strategic planning process?
- What were barriers to strategic planning?
- What were the benefits of the strategic planning process?

What were the driving forces behind the decision to develop a statewide strategic plan?

All five states began their strategic planning initiatives under the direction of a state lead agency. Funding and effective victim delivery service systems were the impetus for beginning strategic planning.

The primary driving force in four out of the five states was making funding decisions based on updated, accurate, objective information. In particular,

- In Pennsylvania, change occurred frequently, and they wanted to identify and anticipate positive and negative political factors and influences that affected crime victim services. They began planning to help build strong relationships among individuals and agencies, and to create networking.
- Ohio had recently passed its state-level victims' rights constitutional amendment, which enhanced a number of victims' core rights, including the rights to be informed, to submit victim impact statements, and to a speedy trial. Ohio saw this as the perfect time to organize victims' programs.
- Oregon wanted to make justified victim services funding decisions and to be held accountable for the use of these resources.

Whether a state was expecting significant increases in funding for victims or projecting funding deficits, all states expressed the need for enhanced decision-making about how to allocate limited resources.

Three of the five states, as a secondary desired result, expected to be better able to organize and coordinate state services for victims and survivors by building stronger relationships and networks among individuals and agencies.

What were your stated goals and objectives for the strategic planning effort?

Several states produced strong statements that reflected their goals for entering into the strategic planning process.

Colorado's goals and objectives

Colorado's strategic planning goal was ensuring that crime victims received effective services through well-coordinated programs. Two key project phases helped them work toward that goal:

1. Gathering information, research, and analysis.
2. Implementing identified necessary corrections.

In addition, Colorado developed the following comprehensive mission statement:

"To improve the lives of those affected by crime by:

- Providing increased resources to communities (through legislation, education, information and additional funding);
- Developing strategies for implementation of local priorities;
- Identifying and responding to the varied needs of crime victims throughout the state;
- Identifying and responding to local stakeholders;
- Incorporating the voice and experience of victims of crime in decisions that affect the field of victim services; and
- Supporting the prevention of crime."

Oregon's goals and objectives

Oregon, through the Department of Justice Crime Victims Assistance Section, selected Portland State University to create an Oregon Crime Victim Services Needs Assessment. The overall goals included having information to allow them to:

- Determine funding based on an objective, true need determination, instead of a subjective decision, and
- Evaluate the current delivery system.

More specifically, the final written report will address the following objectives:

- Identify significant gaps in services for crime victims.
- Identify underserved populations of victims, including information indicating the reasons for a lack of quality services to the target population; identify model service programs to improve services.
- Present contractors' recommendations, best practices, and service models along with priority needs for underserved populations, based on collected data.
- Assess how effectively crime victims' services are linked in order to meet the needs of victims. For example, are crisis lines linked with appropriate follow-up services such as shelters and mental health services?
- Identify obstacles preventing more effective partnerships and continuity of response.
- Evaluate the quality of existing services, as determined by victims' and providers' perception of services.
- Assess how Crime Victim's Rights are implemented in Oregon.

Vermont's goals and objectives

Vermont, having received a VS 2000 grant, used a multi-stage approach to strategic planning. They began by hiring a Victim Services 2000 Project Director. The Vermont Attorney General convened a 40-member Advisory Group to develop a project overview, discuss Victim Services 2000 grant requirements, obtain initial project implementation input and ideas, and discuss needs assessment. Vermont VS 2000 developed a two-tiered plan:

- **Tier 1:** Creating a statewide strategic planning mission, vision, and goals, with priorities developed in conjunction with local programs.
- **Tier 2:** Outreach to victims and service providers in three counties to identify their needs, and obtain input about how to close gaps in services.

Who were the Stakeholders/Key Players involved in organizing and implementing the strategic plan?

All states emphasized inclusivity in their planning processes. All states had similarly organized planning groups, but each with its own perspective.

Colorado's planning team

In Colorado, the planning group created a nine-member victim services statewide Planning Committee, with specific duties for each member. They deemed it critical to have all of the victim coalition Executive Directors involved, along with each victim funding board chair, and they left open the option to add to the team as needed.

Oregon's planning team

The Crime Victims Assistance Section of the Oregon Department of Justice staff manages their project with Portland State University, the contractor for the Oregon Crime Victim Services Needs assessment. Oregon also established a 13-person Victim Advisory Group, with crime victims and survivors as members. Many members also serve as victim service professionals. The Group meets quarterly with the project team, helps review all survey and focus group questions, and assists with developing victim-sensitive survey wording. Members also help identify and reach out to victims and develop the focus groups.

Ohio's planning team

To guide the planning process, Ohio used a 16-member, Attorney General-appointed board consisting of members from organizations directly involved with victim services. The board included members from the following agencies or constituencies:

- Victim/witness associations,
- Local victim service programs,
- Elderly victims,
- Domestic violence victims,
- Probation Departments or Departments of Rehabilitation and Correction Victim Services,
- County Prosecutors Associations,
- City Law Directors,

- County sheriffs,
- Township or city police departments,
- Common plan judges,
- Municipal or county court judges,
- Private citizens, and
- The House of Representatives.

Pennsylvania's planning team

Pennsylvania's governor appointed a 15-member Victims' Services Advisory Committee (VSAC) to lead the planning process. It included representatives from:

- Statewide coalitions,
- Prosecutor based Victim/witness coordinators,
- Juvenile justice based victim/witness coordinators,
- District Attorneys,
- Department of Aging,
- The Department of Public Welfare,
- County commissioners,
- State police,
- Children's victim services,
- The Department of Corrections,
- Victim Advocate groups,
- The judicial system, and
- Victims/survivors.

What were some of the processes used in your strategic planning?

Oregon and Colorado contracted with research-based institutions to direct their planning efforts. Vermont hired a professional facilitator to guide the strategic planning process including its meetings and Pennsylvania used a consultant to conduct focus groups. All states conducted a form of a state-wide needs assessment, primarily to assess service gaps.

The most frequently cited data collection methods used were:

- Focus groups,
- Written victim service providers surveys,
- Telephone surveys of victims,
- Client satisfaction surveys,
- Oral interviews, and
- Contractors and researchers reviewing and organizing current data.

Colorado's planning processes

In Colorado, strategic planners created four committees to establish victim service priorities complete with measurable goals and action steps with time-lines. They labeled the committees:

- State and Local Funding Boards Committee.
- Law Enforcement, District Attorney, Courts, and Post-conviction Issues Committee.
- Evaluation of Victim Services Committee.
- Evaluation of Existing Funding Sources Committee.

Ohio's planning processes

Ohio's strategic planning process involves board meetings twice a year to make funding recommendations to the Attorney General. Ohio also has an interagency advisory committee that meets quarterly to discuss emerging issues or concerns, and assists with legislative changes that directly benefit crime victims. The committee includes representatives from the state agencies that administer victim grant funds:

- Ohio Department of Criminal Justice Services (Byrne and VAWA).
- Department of Health (state funding).

- Department of Jobs and Family Services (Family Violence Prevention funds).
- Office of the Attorney General (VOCA).

The committee also includes agencies that work with victims, such as the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, Ohio Department of Youth Services, and statewide coalitions.

What were some major outcomes of the strategic planning process?

Colorado's major outcomes

Colorado's funding priorities reflected the most significant change after the strategic planning process's research portion. Due to needs identified through the focus groups and surveys, the Planning Committee realized it needed new sources of victim services funding, and sought creative alternatives, such as using Housing and Urban Development (HUD) money for transitional housing. They also found that they needed to regulate collection rates for local victim assistance programs' victim compensation surcharges due to inconsistent ordering by judges. Additionally, the program resulted in training for judges, law enforcement personnel, and district attorneys.

Ohio's major outcomes

Due to increased publicity, and a proven need, Ohio found victim assistance programs garnering additional funding sources such as private sources, fund-raisers, and county commissioner support. Program support grew through both the community and financial sectors.

Oregon's major outcomes

While Oregon's state-wide needs assessment project continues to evolve, the information contributes to their ongoing strategic plan development. Their findings will also help develop legislative agendas and impact funding requests and allocation.

In the year following the project, CVAS plans to present information and findings at numerous statewide conferences, such as those for law enforcement, district attorneys, victim assistance, domestic violence workers, and child abuse workers. In addition, CVAS hopes to promote local level action planning based upon the information presented, including summaries of victims' needs by type of crime, and tools to help local victim service providers access more funding.

Pennsylvania's major outcomes

Pennsylvania's outcomes include the following:

- Commonwealth-wide committee structure development and implementation.
- Letters providing feedback to participants after planning process completion.
- Conference workshops, such as an annual research/evaluation conference.
- Presentations to state and local victim services coalition leaders and members.

In addition, Pennsylvania also established committees to address a wide range of victims' needs, with new committees created as need occurred. This structure allowed each committee to develop and implement committee-specific goals and objectives. Pennsylvania is also looking at outcome-based tools for victim service programs and victim service use evaluations.

Vermont's major outcomes

Vermont's outcomes included the following:

- Identifying underserved victim populations, such as victims with disabilities, and developing new services to meet their needs.
- Receiving significant feedback about stated needs from respondents, with the top stated need listed as more training.
- Creating a Victim/Survivor of Crime Council, which focused on translating system language and processes so that they could be easily understood by victims and survivors.

What evaluation methods are you using for the strategic planning process?

Colorado's evaluation methods

Colorado established a Victim Services Committee evaluation, but did not measure methodology or the planning process itself. Program participants engaged in informal discussions of problems and solutions.

Ohio's evaluation methods

In Ohio, CVA Office program specialists conduct annual site visits to funded programs, where they interview area staff and allied professionals to ensure that service coordination occurs. Each funded program also provides annual performance reports that identify key issues and problems. In addition, the CVA closely monitors funded programs' financial obligations.

Oregon's evaluation methods

Oregon evaluates its project continually. PSU meets monthly with CVAS and provides updates; the Victim Advisory Committee meets quarterly. In addition, PSU submits any needs assessment processes that include direct contact with crime victims to their Human Subjects Committee. This committee approves methodology prior to its use. CVAS staff also facilitates or attends certain public and Victim Advisory Council meetings to remain updated on developments outside of formal progress meetings.

Pennsylvania's evaluation methods

Pennsylvania evaluates its planning process through the VOCA application process, surveys of victim service providers, and focus groups. Committees meet consistently to evaluate the planning process. In addition, Pennsylvania conducted a statewide telephone survey of the general public to determine public knowledge about the existence of victim services and how to access them. PCCD also funded a follow-up evaluation study to be conducted by Millersville University on the use and effectiveness of victim services.

Vermont's evaluation methods

An evaluation survey was sent to all participants in the Vermont process, and the University of Vermont School of Social Work conducted additional evaluations through Victim Access Project participant interviews. The Office for Victims of Crime also contracted with Caliber to evaluate the project.

What were barriers to strategic planning?

This list represents all barriers mentioned during the interviews.

- Lack of funding.
- Need for participation by agency and department heads—the movers and shakers—rather than assigned representatives.
- Confusion as to which participants should be included in the project.
- Lack of a designated support staff.
- Difficulty reaching underserved victim groups for identification.
- Difficulty obtaining public input; minimal public attendance at forums.
- Difficulties working with some county prosecutors who object to victim assistance programs. This problem was solved by including the state prosecutors' association in the advisory board and conducting a training session at their annual meeting.
- Distributing funding fairly, as some victim advocate groups became competitive over funding.
- Finding unbiased and objective consultants without links to a specific victim services or allied professional group but who were also familiar with the underlying concepts of victim services.
- Remaining gaps in services that need to be identified and funded.
- Despite numerous training opportunities for victim service professionals, there is an on-going need for supplemental professional development.
- No statewide general victim services network.

What were the benefits of the strategic planning process?

All states reported many more benefits than barriers. They were excited about the progress made and the potential for the future.

Vermont's benefits from strategic planning

Vermont listed the following results from their strategic planning efforts. Many of these ideas were also incorporated into other states' reports.

- The strategic planning process identified the need for standards and for the provision of victim services, which are currently under development.
- The Department of Corrections built a closer relationship with its victim services.
- Vermont created new victim assistance positions.

- The DOC funded five Victim Service Coordinator positions out of its own budget, showing agency support and statewide commitment.
- The state established the Vermont Victim Assistance Academy.
- Vermont developed and implemented new training programs for members of the faith community, law enforcement, and crime victims with disabilities.
- Victim services integrated and cooperated.
- The state created a victim services resource directory, and cross-trained project members.
- The planning team continued their strategic planning process to form an all-advocate statewide conference.
- Project members created a brochure about victims' rights and services, including contact information, and offered a summary of victim assistance in Vermont.
- VS 2000 published a quarterly newsletter that highlighted victim services across the state.

Other states' benefits from strategic planning

The other four states cited many additional benefits. Some of these benefits were that:

- Service agencies cooperated to solve problems.
- States reached underserved victims, including victims of color, homicide family survivors, victims of drunk-driving accidents, and victims who came through the children's advocacy center.
- Statewide victim service organizations and the attorney general's office provided increased training, including interactive workshops, to victim service providers, social workers, and criminal justice officials. These entities gained more respect and knowledge regarding the role each plays in serving victims.
- Key players involved in the planning process took the information and recommendations back to their respective organizations for review and implementation. As a result, these organizations gained a new understanding and appreciation of victims, and their own roles in victim services.

- Funding coordination for victim assistance programs was improved, while victim services funding distribution decisions were based on current data and objective criteria.
- States identified best practices to be conducted statewide.
- Future victim services programs will be more accessible.
- The experience of working with local elected officials was enriching.
- States disseminated more information about victim services.
- Statewide multi-jurisdictional groups increased their dialogue and cooperation.
- New legislation granting victim services programs additional funding is anticipated.
- Established more court-based programs not only in felony court but municipal and juvenile courts, increasing victims' trust in the criminal justice system.
- Identified gaps in service delivery that need to be filled, including training needs.
- Programs continually build their capacity with grant writing and administration workshops.

Who contributed to this synthesis?

OVC thanks the following victim assistance leaders for their significant time and resource contribution to this project and for their willingness to share their insights and strategic planning tools.

Colorado

Peggy Gordon, Division of Criminal Justice, Department of Public Safety

Ohio

Sharon Boyer, Office of the Attorney General

Oregon

Connie Gallagher

Pennsylvania

Carol Lavery

Mike Pennington

Vermont

Judy Rex

Jac Patrissi

Barb Whitchurch