

SOWING THE SEEDS OF OUR FUTURE

A Strategic Plan for Meeker County



Adopted on: August 19, 2025
For the years 2025-2027

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Key Officials

Commissioners

Beth Oberg, District 1

Cheryl VanOrt, District 2

Paul Johnson, District 3 (Chair)

Darren Sombke, District 4

Steve Schmitt, District 5

Elected Officials

Brandi Schiefelbein, County Attorney

Brian Cruze, Sheriff

Appointed Officials

Andrew Letson, County Administrator

Melissa Voight, County Assessor

Joel Ramthun, Facilities Director

Heather Lemieux, Finance Director

Tina Schenk, Health & Human Services Director

Mikkell Johnson, Human Resources Director

Rob Oster, Information Technology Director

Greg Schultz, Land Use Director

Braden Piram, Parks Manager

Holly Nelson, Property Records, Taxation & Elections Manager

Phil Schmalz, Public Works Director

Tim Steinert, Veterans Service Officer

Willie Swanson, Dept. of Corrections Supervisor

August 19, 2025

Sowing the Seeds of our Future, is Meeker County’s first strategic plan, the purpose of which is to guide the work that the county pursues through 2027. Development of this plan was the result of a collaborative effort between the Commissioners, elected officials, and department heads. The process was facilitated by Dave Unmacht through a combination of group work sessions and individual interviews, which resulted in the priorities and goals outlined in the plan. Thank you to everyone who participated in the planning process.

The title of the plan, “Sowing the Seeds of our Future” is intended to reflect both that the plan is aspirational, providing guidance for our priorities over the next two years, while also reflecting the rural nature of our community. Meeker County’s rural character is important; the small-town feel and natural beauty are reasons that many people choose to live and raise their families in this community. Additionally, agriculture plays a major role in the local economy, employing people directly and through businesses that support agriculture. As we move forward with the priorities in this plan, this will be important to keep in mind.

This strategic planning process also allowed us to develop organization-wide mission and vision statements, which are intended to be memorable and reflect the guiding principles behind why we choose to pursue this work. Our mission statement, “United to Lead, Driven to Serve” expresses our commitment to lead through service, integrity, and collaboration across the County. At times, our work can feel individual and separate from others within the organization; however, this statement is intended to reflect that everyone plays an important role in supporting members of the community to ensure they are able to thrive. Additionally, we see ourselves as being a leader among counties and within the community, bringing stakeholders together to solve complex problems.

The new vision statement, “Meeker County serves with integrity and purpose—building trust and partnerships to support the health, safety, and well-being of communities where people choose to live, work, and grow” was developed through a collection of ideas generated during one of the work sessions and refined following a survey that sought input from all staff members. Ideas such as integrity and trust were highly rated among the survey and reflect a shared ideal of ensuring that our residents know that the work we perform is at the highest standard with sound ethics backing it up.

The goals that this plan outlines cannot be achieved simply by outlining them in this document. We will need to nurture our seeds so they grow and we achieve our desired outcomes. However, we know that the future is never certain, so priorities outlined in this plan need to be nimble to allow us to address challenges as they come forward. This will be a collaborative effort and I look forward to working on it together.



Andrew Letson
County Administrator

Mission Statement: United to Lead, Driven to Serve

Vision Statement: Meeker County serves with integrity and purpose—building trust and partnerships to support the health, safety, and well-being of communities where people choose to live, work, and grow.

Strategic Plan

The fundamental purpose of a strategic plan is to identify high priorities of the County Board and staff that are monitored, tracked, and publicized. A strategic plan must be fluid, adaptable and evolving based on progress, conditions, and needs of the County. The planning timeframe is one to three years. Organizational Priorities, Strategies and Outcomes can be short or long term focused and realized over varying periods of time. There is a lot of work happening simultaneously in the county and the strategic plan does not take away the value or importance of the day to day and ongoing business.

Organizational Priorities

We will achieve our new mission and vision with four organizational priorities. For presentation, they are independent of each other; all are interconnected and intrinsically related to the overall plan. The list of priorities is not in any order of importance.

Strategies

The four strategies provide a roadmap for achieving our plan. We realize these strategies through deliberative thought and action, identifying goals and action steps to guide us. Strategies are flexible and adapt and adjust to changing and evolving conditions in the organization, business, and priorities of the County Board and community.

Outcomes

There are many potential outcomes in each priority; for illustration purposes each priority has two outcomes. The outcomes refer to the desired result we want to achieve from our strategies and goals. They represent positive change and the ultimate goal of our planning process. The outcomes address the most significant immediate challenges and issues of Meeker County in the 2025-2027 timeframe.

Goals

Goals are designed to be action items within the three-year period. They are tracked and measured and will evolve and change. When finished new goals can be included; if priorities change, new goals can be added and current ones replaced. Goals are a combination of ongoing activities and new ideas. Goals can be simple and easy to complete or more complex, difficult and time consuming.

Strategic Plan Matrix 2025-2027

Organizational Priority	Strategy	Outcome	Outcome
Financial Stewardship	Being prudent, thoughtful, responsive stewards of the public dollars	Optimal value and benefit from all sources of revenue available to support programs and services	Fiscally responsible, efficient, accountable, cost-effective, and transparent county services.
Assets and Amenities	Provide functional and modern facilities that support the needs of the county and community	Facility plans which balances the ability to pay with investments needed in essential capital assets	Prudent management of assets, property, and physical amenities
Quality Economic Growth	Invest in the economic foundations that create a community where people desire to live, work and grow	Strong partner with cities and other stakeholders county-wide to create the environment for an expansion of the tax base and economic development	A destination community that supports the needs of families of all ages
Organizational Excellence	Create and maintain a positive culture to remain a highly competitive employer	Highly functioning team of elected officials and staff working in tandem for the benefit of everyone in the county	Best in class workplace that attracts and retains high quality talent

Priority One – Financial Stewardship

Strategy: Being prudent, thoughtful, responsive stewards of the public dollars.

Outcome: Optimal value and benefit from all sources of revenue available to support programs and services

Outcome: Fiscally responsible, efficient, accountable, cost-effective, and transparent county services.

Goals:

- 1) Evaluate and report on the efficacy of county funded programs, focusing on mandated, non-mandated, and core services
- 2) Explore local option sales tax for long-term stability of transportation funding
- 3) Through the annual budget process, evaluate opportunities for cost savings or reallocation of resources based on identified priorities, while ensuring adequate resources are available

Priority Two – Assets and Amenities

Strategy: Provide functional and modern facilities that support the needs of the county and community.

Outcome: Facility plans which balances the ability to pay with investments needed in essential capital assets.

Outcome: Prudent management of assets, property, and physical amenities.

Goals:

- 1) Support financing for the planned Meeker County Memorial Hospital Renovation
- 2) Pursue a long-term solution for the operation of the demolition landfill and transfer station and prepare for the closure of the demolition landfill upon the expiration of the current MPCA permit
- 3) Develop a plan for the consolidation of the Highway outshops with the goal of eliminating shops that have maintenance and safety issues and no longer support the needs of the department
- 4) Develop a long-term plan for maintenance of county buildings, ensuring that they remain adequate work spaces for staff to be able to perform their work

Priority Three – Quality Economic Growth

Strategy: Invest in the economic foundations that create a community where people desire to live, work and grow.

Outcome: Strong partner with cities and other stakeholders county-wide to create the environment for an expansion of the tax base and economic development.

Outcome: A destination community that supports the needs of families of all ages.

Goals:

- 1) Through the Economic Development Authority, promote the use of the County's share of Statewide Affordable Housing Aid (SAHA) and prioritization of the development of housing to meet current and future needs of the community.
- 2) Support the outcomes identified by the childcare coalition through their strategic planning process to seek opportunities to develop and retain childcare slots
- 3) Update the County's comprehensive land use plan
- 4) Seek opportunities to connect individuals and families with existing services, through strategies such as development of a family resource center

Priority Four – Organizational Excellence

Strategy: Create and maintain a positive culture to remain a highly competitive employer.

Outcome: Highly functioning team of elected officials and staff working in tandem for the benefit of everyone in the county.

Outcome: Best in class workplace that attracts and retains high quality talent.

Goals:

- 1) Create a leadership and development training program
- 2) Evaluate job descriptions and compensation system compared to the market on an annual basis and implement the recommendations
- 3) Identify and implement staff team building activities
- 4) Provide an annual report to the county board on turnover rate and trends in the local labor market as they impact the County

Implementation

The implementation and communication material is important to include in a plan. By including the next steps in the document, it sends a strong message of the seriousness of the plan and intent to act. The plan is an aggressive approach and will require a dedication and commitment from both the Board and staff. All the input received from county officials indicated they are committed to ensuring the strategic plan is successful; this is not easy, yet an adopted plan provides a strong roadmap for the future.

Strategic planning is an effective tool when implemented successfully to support Meeker County in decision-making, communication, management, and leadership. Implementing a strategic plan supports the new vision and mission, and ensures priorities, strategies and outcomes are achieved. The actions in the plan are monitored, tracked, and reported for accountability. Strategic planning provides many positive attributes to the work of the County, including:

- Create an organizational direction to unite everyone toward a common purpose
- Provide a road map to guide policy decisions of the County Board
- Improve the ability to commit time and resources to the most important priorities
- Coalesce employees around common strategies and goals
- Communicate the important priorities to residents, businesses, and stakeholders

The first step of implementation is knowledge and awareness. These steps include actions to educate and inform staff and residents on what the plan is and what it includes. The second step is operationalizing the strategies and goals and the third step is accountability, monitoring, and tracking. Throughout the implementation of the plan, a comprehensive communication strategy is key. The County should develop a communication plan that focuses on the use of traditional media, as well as social media, to inform the public about the status of the plan's goals as well as the work that is done day to day.

Moving forward with a strategic plan is a total team effort, from top to bottom, however, a point person is needed to ensure accountability. The County Administrator will take the lead to ensure all steps of the implementation are followed.

Implementation

The Meeker County Board and staff commit to the following ten steps. The County Administrator will work with the County Board to identify potential actions for individual board members to support in the communication and implementation steps.

1. Publish and share the strategic plan on the website, in newsletters, etc.
2. Create a one-page summary to publish, distribute, and share widely.
3. Ensure all staff throughout the County are briefed on the plan and priorities.
4. Build implementation of the plan into staff work plans and individual goals.
5. Reimagine the organization of the County Board agenda to include the strategies.
6. Hold periodic management team meetings to discuss project status, work to date, etc.
7. Carefully consider timely projects in the budget and capital planning process.
8. Brief the Board every six months on the status of the goals; update as needed.
9. Perform an annual formal review with the Board; update all information as needed.
10. Celebrate successful achievements with timely thanks and recognition.

Implementation of a strategic plan takes commitment, dedication, and courage. A plan is only as valuable and useful as it is relevant and current. Our promise to the community is to ensure our plan provides a solid and attainable roadmap for our journey in the coming years.

