

# Multnomah County Benchmarks

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# Multnomah County Benchmarks

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## **MULTNOMAH COUNTY BENCHMARKS**

### ***Introduction***

Benchmarks are powerful tools that Multnomah County uses to focus our efforts for long-term results and to create partnerships to solve problems. They provide quantified targets for specific, quality of life conditions desired for the future. The benchmarks provide a framework for focusing the resources and performance of Multnomah County. The benchmarks are linked to performance measures and progress towards those results is monitored and reported.

In 1997-98, Multnomah County focused its planning efforts on three long term benchmarks:

- *Increase School Completion With Life Skills Equivalency*
- *Reduce Children in Living Poverty*
- *Reduce Crime*

### ***Background***

This benchmarks system, developed by the Oregon Progress Board, is recognized nationally as a model for governing for results. Benchmarks were originally created as a means to monitor progress towards the goals set forth in *Oregon Shines*, the state's citizen-based strategic plan developed in the late 1980's. The Oregon Progress Board recently updated the strategic plan in *Oregon Shines II*.

Multnomah County Chair Beverly Stein and Portland Mayor Vera Katz jointly established the Portland-Multnomah County Progress Board in September 1993. The local Progress Board, like the state's Oregon Progress Board, is comprised of community leaders committed to monitoring progress towards the benchmarks. Representing a broad spectrum of private and public organizations, the Portland-Multnomah Progress Board adopted a set of over 100 local benchmarks in January 1994 and now works to stimulate collaborative efforts in the most urgent areas.

Multnomah County first adopted 85 benchmarks in February 1994, after a six month process involving County commissioners, department and division managers and citizens. The benchmarks were aligned with the Oregon benchmarks and the Portland-Multnomah Progress Board's community benchmarks, creating a basis for intergovernmental accountability. When the County adopted its benchmarks, twelve urgent benchmarks were highlighted, providing a focus for policy-making, program planning, budgeting, performance measurement and evaluation efforts.

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After a few years, the County realized that many good things were happening around the twelve urgent benchmarks. But in order to create real change and produce significant outcomes, they needed to narrow the focus to few benchmarks, emphasizing the interrelationships between benchmarks. In September 1996, the Board of County Commissioners held a day long worksession to discuss benchmarks trends, to create their "mental map" of benchmark interrelationships and to select benchmarks to focus on over the next several years.

The Board developed two new vision statements and selected three Long Term Benchmarks and five Breakthrough Benchmarks to focus longterm planning and alignment of services around.

The two new **Vision** statements describe what the County wants to achieve:

***Increase Sense of Personal Opportunity & Success***

***Increase Sense of Safety and Security***

These vision statements are in addition to the RESULTS Roadmap vision:

***"The people of Multnomah County will receive excellent quality, customer-focused service, and a good value for their tax dollars. Multnomah County employees will have an excellent place to work."***

**Long Term Benchmarks** are the outcomes that the county will focus on:

***Reduce Children in Living Poverty***

***Increase School Completion with Life Skills Equivalency***

***Reduce Crime***

Breakthrough benchmarks are benchmarks that the Board of County Commissioners saw as the "hot buttons" to push for change. Analysis and research is needed to see if these are actually the benchmarks that drive change in the Long Term Outcome Benchmarks and in the community.

***Increase Readiness for School; Meeting Development Milestones***

***Reduce Teen Pregnancy***

***Assure a Competent, Loving Adult for Each Child***

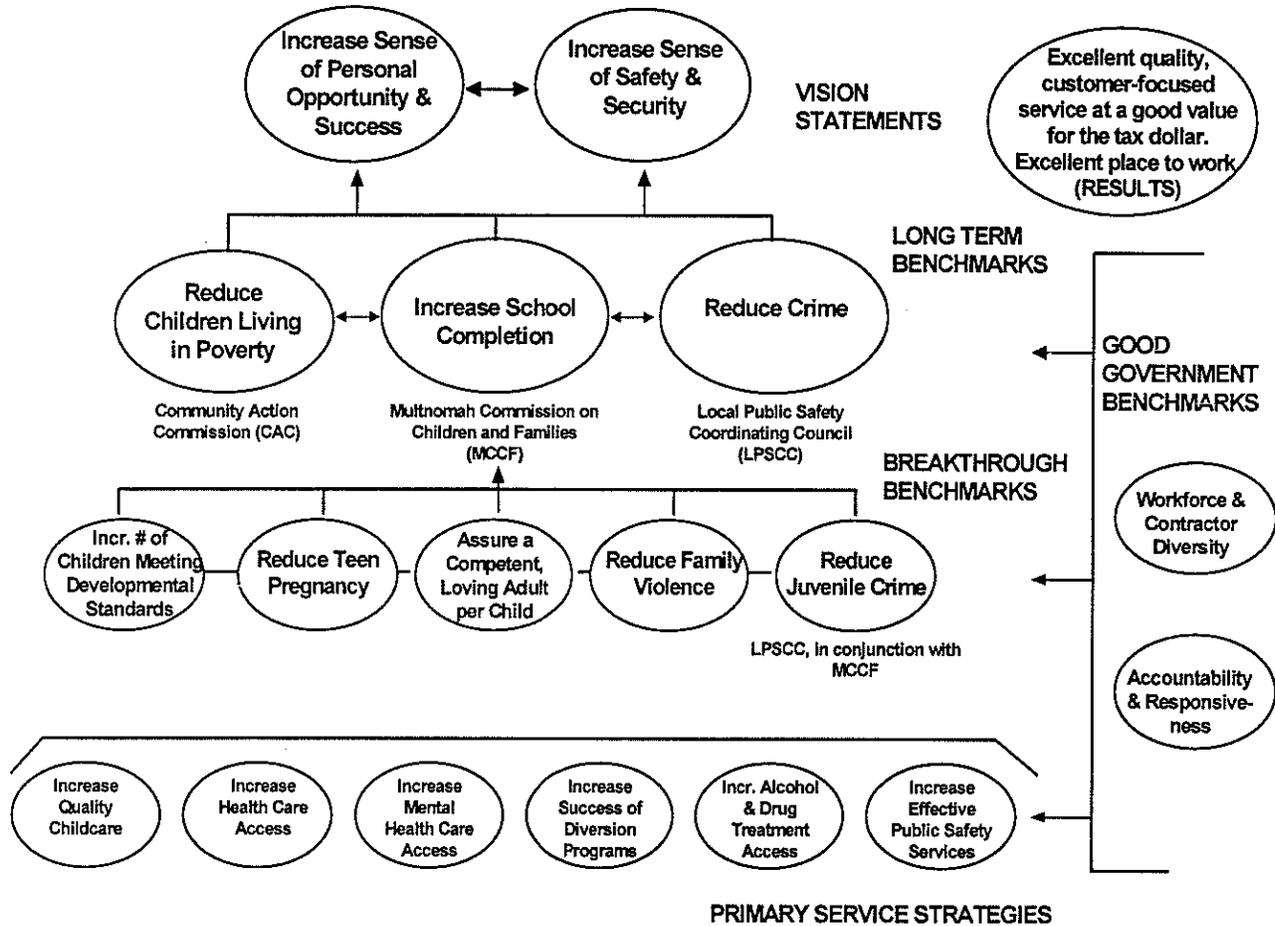
***Reduce Domestic Violence***

***Reduce Juvenile Crime***

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The following chart shows the Board of County Commissioners' "mental map" of the vision and benchmarks relationships developed at the September 1996 Benchmark worksession.

Multnomah Board of County Commissioners' Benchmark Retreat  
September 17, 1996



*Multnomah Board of County Commissioners' Mental Map -  
County Vision and Benchmarks Relationships.  
Developed at the September 1996 Benchmark Worksession.*

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Primary service strategies are the benchmarks that address services which should be considered as possible strategies for all benchmarks, especially the breakthrough benchmarks. They provide the service foundation for the County, primary dealing with access to services.

*Increase Health Care Access*

*Increase Mental Health Care Access*

*Increase Alcohol and Drug Treatment Access*

*Increase Quality Childcare*

*Increase Effective Law Enforcement Services*

Good government benchmarks apply across all services provided by the county.

*Increase County Work Force and Contractor Diversity*

*Increase County Government Accountability & Responsiveness*

*Citizen Satisfaction*

*Government Responsiveness*

*Cost of Government - per capita cost of government.*

## USING THE BENCHMARKS

### ***Strategic Planning Around Benchmarks***

In 1996, the County began concentrating on processes to achieve the **RESULTS (Reaching Excellent Service Using Leadership and Team Strategies)** goal to think and act strategically. The County uses its benchmarks to:

- Maximize County effectiveness by focusing its efforts around a few selected benchmarks that support the County's vision.
- Plan around common benchmark strategies and outcomes.
- Increase coordination and collaboration between departments and with community partners.
- Link the County's benchmarks to performance measurements for specific activities and outcomes.

In 1997 and 1998, several County Departments underwent long range strategic planning processes which included alignment with the three long term benchmarks and other County benchmarks.

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## ***Planning for Major Service Reductions in the 1997-98 Budget***

In November 1996, Measure 47 was approved, cutting property tax revenues and capping future revenue growth. Facing major budget cuts and service reductions, the Long Term Benchmarks provided part of the framework for decision making. Chair Beverly Stein's December 10, 1996 memo, recommending the County's approach to Ballot Measure 47 cuts, said:

**"We will be guided by the Vision of Multnomah County, as developed by the Board of County Commissioners this fall. We want to maintain services and frame new service approaches that help us accomplish strategies which advance our long term benchmark outcomes of **children out of poverty, school completion, and reducing crime.**"**

County Chair Stein and County departments used the long term benchmarks as a factor in developing budgets. Agencies charged with community planning for the long term benchmarks continued to develop strategies and outcomes, working with community experts, reviewing research data, and involving broad stakeholder review. Lead agencies' planning efforts include:

- The Multnomah Commission on Children and Families' strategic plan includes the "High School Completion" benchmark.
- The Community Action Commission is charged with anti-poverty planning including the "Reduce Children Living in Poverty" benchmark.
- The Local Public Safety Coordinating Council is charged with planning for the "Reduce Crime" benchmark, starting with juvenile crime prevention (a breakthrough benchmark).

## ***Linking Vision, Benchmarks, and Performance Measurements in 1998-99 Budget***

Preparation for the 1998-99 budget began with a review of which County programs supported the achievement of the County's three long term benchmarks. Every program in the budget was looked at to see if its Key Result Measures linked directly to the benchmarks' measures or if it contributed to the achievement of the benchmarks in an indirect way. This allowed the County to:

- Identify what programs are focused on the strategic Long Term Benchmarks
- Identify areas for coordination and collaboration; identify gaps
- Link program outcomes to progress towards achieving benchmarks

This analysis was used to see where cross-departmental planning was useful to propose programs that addressed the Long Term Benchmarks.

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## ***Policy Discussions Around Benchmarks***

To advance the vision of an increased sense of personal opportunity and success and an increased sense of safety and security for Multnomah County residents, in January 1998 the County Board Of Commissioners assumed sponsorship for the development and discussion of benchmark policies. Each Multnomah County Commissioner, through agreement with the Chair, has acted as the sponsor of one long term benchmark or area of strategic implementation.

The sponsoring Commissioner has the following roles:

- Coordinate Benchmark Briefings for Board policy discussion of issues relating to the implementation of the benchmark or strategic area.
- Membership on the key county or cross jurisdictional committees that are doing strategic planning related to the benchmark or strategic area.
- Advocate with the key governmental and nongovernmental agencies to ensure their active participation in the achievement of the benchmark.
- Review key cross departmental or cross jurisdictional budget initiatives designed to advance success in the benchmark or strategic area.
- Advocate for research and evaluation designed to develop and implement best practices in the benchmark or strategic area.

The Chair's Office and the Budget Office are available to assist Commissioners with these roles. This includes assisting in the development of briefing materials, benchmarks data and analysis, and coordination with County departments.

With two new County Commissioners joining the Board in June 1998, benchmark strategy and assignments will be reviewed. More detailed actions will be developed as the Commissioners adapt the benchmark liaison role to their other important public priorities.