



Franklin County Action Plan & Recommendations

Prepared for
The Franklin County Commissioners

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Executive Summary

The Franklin County Organizational Culture Assessment identified a workforce that is highly committed to public service, demonstrates strong team-level relationships, and continues to show resilience through organizational change. These strengths provide a solid foundation upon which future improvements can be built.

The assessment also identified recurring opportunities to strengthen organizational communication, trust, leadership consistency, role clarity, employee engagement, and process standardization. While many employees described positive experiences within their immediate teams, significant variability exists in how staff experience communication, leadership interaction, decision-making, and organizational support across departments.

A recurring theme throughout the assessment was the desire for greater consistency in organizational expectations, performance feedback, and employee development. Employees reported differing experiences regarding coaching, recognition, accountability, and formal performance discussions depending on department, supervisor, or role. Establishing a consistent employee evaluation process presents an opportunity to strengthen communication, reinforce expectations, improve accountability, support employee development, and provide a structured mechanism for ongoing employee feedback.

The recommendations contained within this Action Plan are intended to provide a practical framework for strengthening organizational effectiveness while preserving the County's existing strengths. The recommendations are organized into Immediate Priorities (0–90 Days), Mid-Term Priorities (3–6 Months), and Long-Term Priorities (6–18 Months) to support a manageable and sustainable approach to organizational improvement.

The recommendations focus on six primary areas:

- Improving communication
- Strengthening trust and psychological safety
- Promoting leadership alignment and accountability
- Standardizing key organizational
- Enhancing employee engagement
- Strengthening organizational alignment

Collectively, these recommendations are designed to build upon the County's existing strengths while addressing the organizational patterns identified throughout the assessment. Successful implementation will require sustained leadership commitment, ongoing communication, and a shared focus on continuous improvement across all levels of the organization.

Immediate Priorities (0–90 Days)

1. Acknowledge and Communicate Assessment Results

The County should formally communicate the completion of the assessment process and provide employees with a summary of key findings.

Recommended Actions:

- Share the Cultural Assessment with all employees, union staff and elected officials.
- Reiterate the purpose of the assessment and communicate how findings will be used.
- Reinforce that employee participation and feedback were valued and appreciated.
- Establish realistic expectations regarding implementation timelines.

Expected Outcome:

Employees gain confidence that their participation resulted in meaningful consideration.

2. Establish a Culture Improvement Steering Team

Create a small cross-functional group that meets monthly for 6 months, responsible for monitoring implementation efforts of the agreed-upon elements of this plan and advising County leadership of progress during County Commissioner’s Meetings.

Recommended Composition:

- County Administrator
- Commissioner representative (s)
- Director of Human Resources
- Department Head representative
- Supervisor representative
- Frontline employee representative

Expected Outcome:

Improved coordination, accountability, and visibility surrounding culture improvement efforts.

3. Improve Organizational Communication Practices (See Appendix A for Example)

Implement immediate communication improvements focused on clarity and transparency.

Recommended Actions:

- Provide context when communicating significant decisions.
- Identify who is responsible for communicating organizational updates.
- Develop consistent communication expectations for leadership.
- Create opportunities for employees to ask questions regarding major changes.

Expected Outcome:

Reduced confusion, fewer rumors, and improved employee understanding of organizational decisions.

4. Address Trust and Psychological Safety Concerns

Develop visible processes for employee concerns and feedback.

Recommended Actions:

- Review existing complaint and feedback procedures.
- Clarify reporting pathways.
- Communicate anti-retaliation expectations.
- Establish expectations for follow-up communication when concerns are raised.

Expected Outcome:

Improved employee confidence in organizational responsiveness and fairness.

5. Establish a Consistent Employee Performance Evaluation Process

Employees described varying experiences related to performance feedback, coaching, recognition, and expectations. A standardized evaluation process can improve communication, accountability, role clarity, and employee development throughout the organization.

Recommended Actions:

- ✓ Implement a consistent annual performance evaluation process for all employees.
- ✓ Establish standardized evaluation forms and rating criteria.
- ✓ Train supervisors on conducting effective evaluations and coaching conversations.
- ✓ Incorporate discussion of performance goals, professional development, and organizational expectations.
- ✓ Ensure employees have opportunities to provide feedback and participate in the evaluation discussion.

Expected Outcome:

Employees receive regular feedback regarding performance, expectations, strengths, and development opportunities while promoting greater consistency across departments.

Mid-Term Priorities (3–6 Months)

1. Leadership Alignment and Development

Develop consistent leadership expectations across departments.

Recommended Actions:

- Establish leadership communication standards.
- Provide leadership development focused on communication, conflict resolution, accountability, and employee engagement.
- Create expectations for respectful and professional workplace interactions.

Expected Outcome:

More consistent employee experiences across departments and leadership levels.

2. Standardize Core Employee Processes

Review organizational processes that employees described as inconsistent.

Priority Areas:

- Employee onboarding
- New supervisor orientation
- Performance feedback
- Employee recognition
- Corrective action practices
- Internal communication processes

Expected Outcome:

Reduced variability in employee experience and improved organizational consistency.

3. Clarify Roles, Responsibilities, and Decision-Making Authority

Review areas where employees reported uncertainty regarding authority and expectations.

Recommended Actions:

- Update organizational charts and job descriptions.
- Clarify reporting relationships.
- Refine the Board of Commissioners On-Boarding Curriculum.
- Establish communication pathways for organizational decisions.

Expected Outcome:

Improved role clarity and reduced confusion regarding organizational expectations.

4. Increase Employee Engagement Opportunities

Create structured opportunities for employee input.

Recommended Actions:

- Conduct periodic employee pulse surveys.
- Establish employee feedback forums.
- Share implementation progress updates.
- Encourage two-way communication between staff and leadership.

Expected Outcome:

Improved employee participation and increased trust in organizational decision-making.

Long-Term Priorities (6–18 Months)

1. Build a Sustainable Communication Framework

Develop communication systems that support long-term transparency and alignment.

Recommended Actions:

- Quarterly organizational updates.
- Annual organizational priorities communication.
- Standardized change-management communication practices.
- Leadership communication training.

Expected Outcome:

Improved organizational alignment and stronger employee understanding of County priorities.

2. Strengthen Organizational Culture Through Leadership Accountability

Integrate culture-related expectations into leadership responsibilities.

Recommended Actions:

- ✓ Incorporate communication and employee engagement expectations into leadership evaluations.
- ✓ Measure leadership effectiveness through employee feedback.
- ✓ Recognize and reinforce positive leadership practices.
- ✓ Monitor completion rates for annual employee evaluations.
- ✓ Ensure supervisors are held accountable for providing timely and meaningful performance feedback.
- ✓ Incorporate employee development and coaching expectations into leadership responsibilities.

Expected Outcome:

A more consistent and positive employee experience throughout the organization.

3. Establish Ongoing Culture Assessment Practices

Culture improvement should be viewed as an ongoing process rather than a one-time initiative.

Recommended Actions:

- Conduct periodic employee climate surveys.
- Review organizational culture indicators annually.
- Reassess key themes identified within this report.
- Incorporate culture objectives into strategic planning efforts.

Expected Outcome:

Continuous monitoring and improvement of organizational culture over time.

4. Strengthen Cross-Department Collaboration

Develop opportunities for departments to coordinate more effectively.

Recommended Actions:

- Periodic interdepartmental leadership meetings.
- Shared planning initiatives.
- Cross-functional problem-solving teams.
- Standardized operational communication practices.

Expected Outcome:

Improved coordination, reduced silos, and stronger organizational cohesion.

Recommended Accountability Structure

The Franklin County Commissioners should maintain overall ownership of organizational culture improvement efforts while delegating implementation responsibilities to County leadership.

Recommended Responsibilities:**County Commissioners**

- Establish strategic priorities.
- Review implementation progress quarterly.
- Support organizational accountability.

County Administration

- Coordinate implementation efforts.
- Report progress to Commissioners.
- Ensure department participation.

Department Heads and Supervisors

- Implement recommendations within their areas of responsibility.
- Communicate changes to staff.
- Model desired leadership behaviors.

Culture Improvement Steering Team

- Monitor progress.
- Identify barriers.
- Recommend adjustments.
- Serve as an employee feedback resource.

Employees

- Participate in improvement efforts.
- Provide constructive feedback.
- Support organizational change initiatives.

Suggested Success Measures

The County should monitor progress through measurable indicators including:

Communication

- Employee understanding of organizational decisions.
- Employee satisfaction with communication.
- Reduction in communication-related concerns.

Trust and Engagement

- Employee willingness to provide feedback.
- Employee confidence in leadership responsiveness.
- Employee perception of fairness and consistency.

Leadership Effectiveness

- Employee satisfaction with leadership communication.
- Leadership participation in development activities.
- Consistency of leadership practices across departments.

Process Consistency

- Completion of standardized onboarding processes.
- Consistency of performance feedback practices.
- Reduction in process-related employee concerns.

Organizational Culture

- Employee morale indicators.
- Employee retention trends.
- Future employee survey results.
- Overall improvement in culture assessment themes over time.

Performance Management

- ✓ Percentage of employees receiving annual evaluations.
- ✓ Percentage of supervisors completing evaluations on time.
- ✓ Employee satisfaction with performance feedback.
- ✓ Employee understanding of performance expectations.
- ✓ Completion of employee development goals identified during evaluations.

Conclusion

Franklin County possesses many of the foundational strengths necessary to create a highly effective organizational culture. The findings of this assessment suggest that future success will depend less upon major structural change and more upon improving communication, strengthening trust, increasing leadership consistency, and creating greater organizational alignment.

By focusing on these priorities in a deliberate and sustainable manner, Franklin County can build upon its existing strengths while addressing the concerns and opportunities identified throughout this assessment process.

Appendix A

Example Communication Plan for a Significant Organizational Change

Introduction

The following communication plan uses Franklin County's current County Administrator transition as a practical example of how the communication recommendations contained in this report can be applied to a significant organizational event.

Because this report is being finalized after portions of the transition process have already occurred, some milestones described in the example may have already passed. For example, the County has publicly announced the resignation of the current County Administrator, appointed an Interim County Administrator, and conducted media communications regarding the transition. The purpose of this example is not to evaluate or critique actions already taken, nor to suggest that previous communications were inadequate.

Rather, this example is intended to demonstrate what a structured, transparent, and employee-focused communication plan could look like when applied to a major organizational change. The scenario provides an opportunity to illustrate how leadership can communicate important decisions, provide context for those decisions, establish clear communication responsibilities, and create opportunities for employee questions and feedback throughout a transition process.

While the specific circumstances involve the County Administrator position, the communication principles demonstrated in this example can be applied to a wide variety of organizational changes, including leadership transitions, policy changes, departmental restructuring, budget decisions, operational changes, and other matters that may significantly affect employees.

The objective is not to prescribe a single communication method, but rather to provide a practical framework that County leadership can adapt to future situations in order to strengthen transparency, improve employee understanding, and foster trust throughout the organization.

Scenario:

The County Administrator announces their resignation effective July 2, 2026. County leadership appoints Susan Pratt as Interim County Administrator effective June 2, 2026. County leadership must communicate the transition to employees while maintaining transparency, reducing uncertainty, and ensuring continuity of operations.

- ✓ **Communication Objective:**
Provide employees with timely, accurate, and consistent information regarding the leadership transition while minimizing rumors, uncertainty, and misinformation.
- ✓ **Communication Principles:**
 - Communicate early when information can be shared.
 - Provide context, not just decisions.
 - Clearly identify who is responsible for communications.
 - Acknowledge uncertainty when answers are not yet available.
 - Provide opportunities for employee questions and feedback.

Phase 1: Initial Announcement

- ✓ **Timing:** As soon as possible, following notification and acceptance of the resignation.
- ✓ **Audience:** All County Employees
- ✓ **Communicator:** Chair of the County Commissioners
- ✓ **Communication Method:**
 - County-wide email
 - Written memorandum posted in employee common areas
 - Verbal briefing from department heads for employees without regular email access
- ✓ **Message Components:**
 - Acknowledge the resignation.
 - Recognize the departing employee's service.
 - Provide the effective date.
 - Explain the intent to, and rationale for, appointing an interim administrator.
 - Explain what is known regarding transition plans.
 - Explain what information is still being determined.
 - Provide a timeline for future updates.

✓ Example Message:

"The County Commissioners have accepted the resignation of the County Administrator effective July 2, 2026.

We appreciate the Administrator's service to Franklin County and wish them success in their future endeavors.

To ensure continuity of operations and support county employees during this transition, the Commissioners intend to hire an interim County Administrator to fill this mission critical position until a suitable replacement can be hired.

We understand that leadership transitions naturally generate questions among employees. The Commissioners are committed to providing timely updates throughout this process. At this time, we are evaluating the process for recruiting and selecting a permanent County Administrator.

Employees can expect additional updates regarding the recruitment process, anticipated timelines, and opportunities for employee input as those decisions are finalized."

Phase 2: Transition Update

- ✓ Timing: Within 1-2 weeks of the initial announcement.
- ✓ Audience: All County Employees
- ✓ Communicator: Chair of the County Commissioners
- ✓ Communication Method:
 - County-wide email
 - Employee information meeting
 - Written summary distributed following the meeting
- ✓ Message Components:
 - Explain the role and responsibilities of the Interim County Administrator.
 - Clarify reporting relationships and decision-making authority.
 - Explain how operational continuity will be maintained.
 - Provide the anticipated recruitment timeline and selection process.
 - Explain any opportunities for employee participation or feedback.

✓ Example Topics:

- What authority does the Interim County Administrator have?
- Will services or operations change?
- When will recruitment begin?
- Who will participate in the hiring process?
- What timeline is anticipated?
- How will employees receive future updates?

Phase 3: Employee Information Session

- ✓ Timing: Within 30 days of the resignation announcement.
- ✓ Audience: All County Employees
- ✓ Facilitator: Commission Chair and Interim County Administrator
- ✓ Communication Method:
 - In-person meeting
 - Virtual attendance option when feasible
 - Written summary of questions and answers distributed afterward

Purpose:

Provide employees with an opportunity to ask questions directly and receive consistent information regarding the transition.

Discussion Topics:

- ✓ Status of the recruitment process.
- ✓ Organizational priorities during the transition.
- ✓ Operational continuity plans.
- ✓ Employee concerns and questions.

Ground Rules:

- ✓ Questions are welcomed.
- ✓ Information will be shared whenever legally and operationally appropriate.
- ✓ Questions that cannot be answered immediately will be documented and addressed in future updates.

Phase 4: Ongoing Updates

- ✓ Timing: Monthly until a permanent County Administrator is selected.
- ✓ Audience: All County Employees
- ✓ Communicator: Commission Chair or Interim County Administrator
- ✓ Communication Method:
 - Monthly email update
 - Monthly Commissioner meeting update
 - Written summaries posted for employee review
- ✓ Content:
 - Recruitment progress.
 - Upcoming milestones.
 - Changes to anticipated timelines.
 - Important organizational updates related to the transition.

Phase 5: Selection Announcement

- ✓ Timing: Following acceptance of an employment offer.
- ✓ Audience: All County Employees
- ✓ Communicator: Chair of the County Commissioners
- ✓ Communication Method:
 - County-wide email
 - Press release/public announcement
 - County website posting
 - Social media announcement
 - Employee meet-and-greet announcement
- ✓ Message Components:
 - Introduce the selected candidate.
 - Explain the selection process.
 - Provide the anticipated start date.
 - Outline onboarding and transition plans.
 - Share opportunities for employees to meet the new administrator.

Expected Outcome:

By following a structured communication plan, employees receive consistent information throughout the transition process, reducing uncertainty and speculation while increasing trust in organizational leadership. Employees may not always agree with decisions made; however, they are more likely to understand how decisions were reached, why decisions were made, and what to expect moving forward.