

County making progress on strategic focus area goals

By Hector Flores

In my previous two columns, I've shared progress Charlotte County has made to achieve goals laid out by the County Commission in three of the four focus areas in its strategic plan, public services, infrastructure and economic and community development. The commission's fourth and final strategic focus area is efficient and effective government.

This focus area is intended to guide the county in managing fiscally sound county operations with a culture of transparency, accountability, citizen engagement and innovation. The bold goals set out by the board include ensuring a culture as a great place to work with an ethic of continuous improvement. The board also stressed increasing line of sight, which enables employees to see direct connections between strategic focus areas and goals and their day-to-day work. In light of our experiences with Hurricane Ian, the board added another goal to the focus area: strengthening the resiliency and communication of the organization.

In 2023, we continued focusing our internal communications on line of sight and employee engagement, weekly administrator messages, strengthening middle management and aligning our performance evaluation process with our mission, vision and values.

We created and distributed line of sight boards as a tool to connect employee roles with organizational success. Administration initiated quarterly manager and supervisor meetings and we began an overhaul of our performance appraisal process. The county earned 38 National Association of Counties Achievement Awards, the most ever, and submitted a record 48 applications for the 2024 contest.

We obtained grants and other funding to improve operational resiliency and develop policies and practices to ensure continuity of operations. We're conducting a countywide vulnerability assessment conforming with state requirements. After completion, this assessment will open the door for further Resiliency Florida funding for resiliency projects. We've incorporated a resiliency score into the master space plan planning process to ensure we identify the county structures that are resilient.

Any organization is only as resilient as its people. In recent years, we're spent a lot of time and energy looking at ways to ensure our employees have access to and awareness of mental health assessments and treatments. We created a mental health task force and solicited feedback from employees. We added services for employees and their families, including virtual appointments, and made them available to seasonal and part-time employees as well as full-time employees.

The strategic planning review process is about reinforcing the county's vision and being accountable for making progress on achieving goals. I can tell you we came up short on some

and others are still works in progress. But I can also tell you, we will work every day to reach goals set by the commission and delivery exceptional service to our community.

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