



NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL
SEWER DISTRICT



STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-2013
"Transparency, Accountability,
and Environmental Stewardship"

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INTRODUCTION

The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District is a political subdivision of the State of Ohio. It was established by court order in 1972 to convey and treat wastewater in Cleveland and surrounding communities.

Since its creation, the District has planned, designed, constructed, operated, and maintained \$1.4 billion of facilities to solve regional problems associated with sanitary and combined sewers. The District's services to the community will expand again, as plans to launch a stormwater management program come to fruition.

This 2009-2013 Strategic Plan focuses the organization on greater service to our customers, stressing accountability, transparency, and environmental stewardship.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District's last Strategic Plan provided direction for the organization from 2004-2008.

In 2008, Executive Director Julius Ciaccia, along with the District's leadership team, developed a plan to chart the organization's direction for the next five years. The consulting firm URS was engaged to facilitate the planning process.

A variety of data was assembled to guide the deliberations of the Strategic Planning Committee. These various materials included:

- In-depth review conducted on numerous strategic planning efforts throughout the United States
- Interviews with senior management and key employees.
- Review of past NEORS D capital improvement programs and identification of trends.
- Review and analysis of past NEORS D strategic plans and carryover of pertinent information and work-in-progress.
- A series of workshops with the Senior Staff leadership team.

Through a series of facilitated work sessions, the Strategic Planning Committee revisited and refined the District's mission, crafted a new vision statement, reaffirmed the organization's core values, and developed the following six strategic goals to guide the organization over the next five years:

Goal No. 1: We will strive to understand, inform, and meet our customers' water quality expectations.

Goal No. 2: We will expand services and service area based upon economic drivers and opportunities to enhance water quality and watershed protection.

Goal No. 3: We will sustain our strong financial position, balancing our commitment to water quality and customer expectations.

Goal No. 4: We will cost effectively execute and manage our Capital Improvement Program.

Goal No. 5: We will align, build upon, and sustain our key assets, resources, people, and technology to meet our vision.

Goal No. 6: We will become an organization whose culture is progressive and embraces environmental sustainability.

The forgoing elements—along with the attendant strategies to achieve the six goals—constitute the remaining sections of this strategic plan.

MISSION

To serve our customers by leading effective wastewater and stormwater management that protects the health and environment of our region while enhancing quality of life.

VISION

To be the leading environmental organization that sustainably manages our region's water resources to protect public health and promote economic development.

CORE VALUES

NEORSD is committed to:

- **Environmental Stewardship:** Environmental leadership focused on responsible regional watershed protection.
- **Ethics, Honesty, and Transparency:** Maintain the highest standards with our customers, our business partners, and each other.
- **Balanced and Informed Decision Making:** Quality decisions based on objective metrics, analysis of our systems, customer needs, and organizational goals.
- **Customer Focus:** Keep our customers in mind in all of our decisions, policies, and programs.
- **Progressive Culture:** Embrace and promote innovation in our organization, region, and industry.
- **Accountability:** Demonstrate responsibility for our obligations and deliver on our commitments.



GOALS, STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, and METRICS

Goal: What we will do.

Global Metric: What we will see.

Strategic Initiative: How we will do it.

METRICS

What we will use as milestones.

Goal No. 1: We will strive to understand, inform, and meet our customers' water quality expectations.

Global Metric: As a result, the District has a greater impact on water quality with a greater customer appreciation and understanding today than five years ago.

Strategic Initiative No. 1: Regional water quality improvement through effective conveyance and treatment of wastewater.

METRICS

- A. Develop a strategy to assist communities in the elimination of Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSO).
- B. Attain a further reduction of 500 million gallons of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO).
- C. Consistently operate below permitted operational limits while handling the increased plant flows (due to Dugway, Euclid Creek, Mill Creek tunnels, etc.) and in anticipation of further regulatory pressure.
- D. Achieve platinum "peak performance" award status at the treatment plants.
- E. Develop a long-term Environmental Monitoring Program.

Strategic Initiative No. 2: Manage our long-term regulatory obligations in the best interest of the customer.

METRICS

- A. Gain approval to proceed and obtain necessary permits from OEPA and USEPA to implement key Long-Term Control Plan (LTCP) projects during the negotiation process.
- B. Continue to negotiate to gain approval of the LTCP from OEPA and USEPA.

Strategic Initiative No. 3: Develop a customer communication program to understand expectations and develop key performance indicators.

METRICS

- A. Identify key performance indicators and report.
- B. Develop, administer, and evaluate customer surveys aimed at gauging service level satisfaction.
- C. Develop and deliver an Environmental Road Show and other targeted materials for customer contact and education.
- D. Monitor and report annually on customer survey results.
- E. Complete participant evaluations for activities hosted by the District (satisfaction cards/surveys).
- F. Increase contact with customer base.

Goal No. 2: We will expand services and service area based upon economic drivers and opportunities to enhance water quality and watershed protection.

Global Metric: As a result, the District has taken on many new customers, who are appreciative of the new services provided.

Strategic Initiative No. 4: Develop and implement measurable and value-added stormwater services that benefit our customers.

METRICS

- A. Develop an integrated regional and local strategy that focuses on a positive message, customer buy-in, and the urgency and necessity of the program.
- B. Implement the 12 components of the Stormwater Program as outlined in the Stormwater Program Plan.
- C. Identify and execute the top 20 stormwater projects.
- D. Monitor the impact of executed stormwater projects and develop a strategy to communicate the benefits to the community and adjust the program as necessary.

Strategic Initiative No. 5: Identify, prioritize, and incorporate into our system wastewater treatment and collection facilities to improve watershed protection.

METRICS

- A. Acquire additional collection and treatment facilities with a goal of positively impacting water quality.
- B. Establish the District as an alternative for owning/operating/maintaining other systems.
- C. Demonstrate water quality improvement in the receiving streams.

Strategic Initiative No. 6: Position NEORSD as the champion for clean water in the region.

METRICS

- A. Increase confidence with customers on a broader service platform.
- B. Complete project to change the organization's name to reflect being a clean water agency.
- C. Partner with District business community to offer District resources to enhance economic development in the region.
- D. Initiate a campaign with all media outlets covering water quality issues communicating the District's commitment to water quality to our customers.

Goal No. 3: We will sustain our strong financial position balancing our commitment to water quality and customer expectations.

Global Metric: As a result, we have accomplished a majority of the Strategic Plan initiatives while operating within our rate structure and maintaining a strong financial position, including our bond rating.

Strategic Initiative No. 7: Establish a decision making framework and organizational structure at the Senior Staff level to align the organization with the vision.

METRICS

- A. Refine (from the new process developed in 2008) the 2009 budgeting process for 2010 that establishes a more meaningful planning function to provide the necessary data that the entire organization recognizes.
- B. Refine the 2009 budgeting process for 2010 that establishes a framework to create a guiding coalition for decision making for funding of projects.
- C. Develop a communication continuum that deploys the new vision throughout the organization.
- D. Establish a fund allocation process to identify and prioritize projects for existing assets, LTCP, stormwater, and expansion of the service areas utilizing asset management principles.

Strategic Initiative No. 8: Improve process for validation and funding of Capital Improvement Plan based on Life Cycle Model.

METRICS

- A. Conduct rate study with two-year phase including a sources and uses plan.
- B. Implement planning/budgeting process using the Oracle system in 2009.
- C. Implement information reporting tools to support the Capital Improvement Plan validation process.
- D. Develop 10-year Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) within two years.

Strategic Initiative No. 9: Utilizing the Asset Management framework, develop an annual report on the state of the District's system which assesses current conditions, predicts future conditions, and includes financial strategy recommendations.

METRICS

- A. Develop and implement an annual reporting process with defined action plans and recommendations for improvement.

Goal No. 4: We will cost effectively execute and manage our Capital Improvement Program.

Global Metric: As a result, 90% of the planned projects in the 2009 five-year Capital Improvement Program have been awarded in the associated plan year, based on the approved rates.

Strategic Initiative No. 10: Develop and implement a process to effectively execute the Capital Improvement Program.

METRICS

- A. Develop key performance indicators as identified in the Phase I Program Management Project by 2009.
- B. Achieve key performance indicators developed in the Phase I Program Management Project in the next five years.

Strategic Initiative No. 11: Develop and implement contract administration and controls.

METRICS

- A. 85% of all projects delivered within 105% of contractor award amount.
- B. Develop contracting procedure manual.
- C. Develop a system to track and monitor hard and soft contracts and actual costs.
- D. Develop cash flow projections based on a more refined cost estimating and feed into the framework of Goal No. 3.

Goal No. 5: We will align, build upon, and sustain our key assets, resources, people, and technology to meet our vision.

Global Metric: As a result, resources have been integrated to support current and new business.

Strategic Initiative No. 12: Sustain and enhance a qualified, productive, and innovative workforce capable of thriving in a dynamic and changing environment.

METRICS

- A. Complete classification study to determine mix of internal/external resources required to meet water quality/customer initiatives.
- B. Secure required resources and balance internal/external resource needs for stormwater utility.
- C. Establish succession plan strategy to include replacement plan, knowledge management, and leadership development.
- D. Develop required training programs to support new processes and fully utilize new systems.
- E. Develop performance management initiatives.
- F. Develop an employee recognition program.

Strategic Initiative No. 13: Develop and implement an internal and external program that promotes diversity, inclusion, and local business opportunities.

METRICS

- A. Establish and implement small business enterprise program.
- B. Complete disparity study.
- C. Continue implementation of Diversity and Inclusion strategy.
- D. Develop and implement ongoing employee diversity and inclusion training.

Strategic Initiative No. 14: Identify, prioritize, and implement technology and business process improvements to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and provide additional value to our customers.

METRICS

- A. Develop information technology master plan aligned with the District Strategic Plan and business processes.
- B. Develop a comprehensive customer service program.
- C. Complete evaluation to further automate the wastewater treatment plants and collection facilities.

Goal No. 6: We will become an organization whose culture is progressive and embraces environmental sustainability.

Global Metric: As a result, our new culture encourages a broader perspective.

Strategic Initiative No. 15: Incorporate USEPA sustainable water infrastructure principles into the culture at the District.

METRICS

- A. Embrace the four pillars of sustainable infrastructure.

Strategic Initiative No. 16: Establish and execute practices that yield positive, broad based environmental benefits.

METRICS

- A. Develop a sustainability program. (Reduce District's carbon footprint, offset gas emissions, establish recycle policies and goals, etc.).
- B. Evaluate sustainable utilization of biosolids.
- C. Integration of green initiatives throughout the District organizationally.
- D. Obtain Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, where it is feasible, on capital projects.

Strategic Initiative No. 17: Drive continuous improvement practices as a fundamental aspect of doing business.

METRICS

- A. Develop clarity around O.R.C. 6119 to improve ability to operate.
- B. Continue to develop partnerships and alliances with other agencies and organizations.
- C. Be recognized as leaders in the industry.
- D. Continue to endorse active involvement in local, state, national, and international professional organizations.
- E. Develop a benchmarking program.

Strategic Initiative No. 18: Lead industry research and technology development, and regulatory and legislative advancements.

METRICS

- A. Develop program for disposal and monitoring of pharmaceuticals.
- B. Complete a wet weather demonstration project for enhancement of the LTCP.
- C. Work with the Water Environment Research Foundation (WERF) on value added green alternatives.
- D. Explore the development of a research and development function.

CONCLUSION

This Strategic Plan provides a navigational guide for the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District over the next five years. The District's Board and administration share the responsibility of monitoring and tracking the implementation of the plan. The continually changing environment in which the District operates will require annual review in order for the plan to remain most timely and useful.

The inclusive strategic planning process which led to this plan broadened and deepened the understanding and appreciation of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for the District. With the implementation of strategies in this plan there is every reason to believe that the District will understand and meet consumer needs, enhance water quality, provide for cost effective and efficient capital improvements, and continue to build on its already strong reputation as a preeminent leader among water agencies.



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