MN PLANNING LIBRARY
3 0327 00002 0942

FILE COPY

Planning for Effective Decision Making in HUMAN SERVICES

A Guide for Minnesota's County Commissioners and Other Elected Officials

HV
86
.M68
1979x
c.1

Planning for Effective Decision Making in Human Services

A Guide for Minnesota's County Commissioners and Other Elected Officials

Minnesota State Planning Agency
Human Resources Planning Unit
101 Capitol Square Building
550 Cedar Street
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

May, 1979

TABLE OF CONTENTS

page

Preface i

Introduction iii

I. Making the Decision to Plan 1

What is Planning? 1

The Advantages of Planning 1

Potential Problems 2

II. Getting Started 5

Preplanning Activities 5

The Steps in the Planning Process 6

Defining Roles of Actors in the Planning Process 7

III. Resources Available for Planning in Minnesota 9

IV. Integrating County Budget Preparation and Human Services Planning 11

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The Human Service Planning System 1

Figure 2: Steps in the Planning Process 2

Figure 3: Integrating County Budget Preparation and Human Services Planning 12

PREFACE

Minnesota is proud of its accomplishments in human services over the last decade. Citizens in need of services because of their economic, medical, social and/or educational status are more likely to find services available and accessible now than in the past.

But Minnesota, like many other states, continues to work toward developing better ways of managing human services, especially at the county level. The complex mix of services, funding sources and target groups contributes to the increasing difficulties encountered in developing county budgets.

Human services administrators, planners and elected officials at all levels of government in Minnesota have acknowledged these complexities and have committed themselves to the development of tools and procedures that will facilitate planning and decision making in human services. This report, written for county commissioners and other elected officials, is one of two technical assistance reports drafted by the Minnesota State Planning Agency. A companion document, *Human Services: A Guide to County Planning and Decision Making,* was written specifically for administrators and planners.

In the summer of 1977, the State Planning Agency assembled an advisory committee to critique the general content of these reports. Members of this group provided both encouragement and direction for the project. Our thanks to all of them:

Rich Dethmers, State Planning Agency — Office of Local & Urban Affairs
Mark McGarraugh, Office of Planning & Development, Hennepin County
Roger Israel, Metropolitan Council
John Brenneman, Department of Public Welfare
Linda Thorson, Mille Lacs County Family Service & Welfare Department
Diane Sprague, State Planning Agency — Developmental Disabilities Planning
Jan Anderson, State Planning Agency — Health Planning
Sam Walz, Anoka County Human Services
Dave Rooney, Olmsted County Community Corrections
Don Selger, Department of Corrections
Jim Nobles, Council on Aging
Jane Whiteside, Metropolitan Council
John Sem, Department of Transportation
Dave Martin, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
Daryl Bessler, Region 2 Development Commission
Chrys Zaglifa, Statewide CETA Coordination, Department of Economic Security
Lary Granger, Association of Minnesota Counties
Sue Smith, Scott County Human Services Board
John Anderson, Olmsted County Human Services

This report was based on both published materials and interviews with persons in Minnesota who have extensive planning experience in human services. Elaine Timmer, the former Director of Human Resources Planning in Region IV, assembled the publication and deserves special mention. In addition, planning documents from the following counties were especially helpful: Faribault-Martin-Watonwan (Human Services Comprehensive Plan 1977) Grant, Dakota, Chisago-Kanabec (Community Health Services Plan 1977), Olmsted (Needs Assessment 1978) and Scott.

INTRODUCTION

County commissioners have come under increasing pressure in recent years to address the human service needs of citizens. Two forces have been at work which have brought this about. First, there has been a gradual shift in responsibilty for human services from the private to the public sector. In the early days of this country, each individual family provided for its own life support and social needs. When this became impossible, the church or other private organizations stepped in to assist. However, as the population grew and life became more complex, the provision of basic social needs became more costly. This resulted in a gradual shift of responsibility from the private to the public sector. Private agencies and individuals still continued to deliver social and human services but more and more the costs of these services were borne by the public sector.

Secondly, public decision making has shifted from the state and federal levels to local levels. In Minnesota, county government has emerged as the primary agency responsible for meeting human service needs. This decentralization of decision making through such programs as general revenue sharing, the Title XX social services program and community health services has been accompanied by the requirements for broad-based human service planning at the local level. More and more county commissioners have been pressured to address citizens' social problems and to allocate funds to meet their needs.

Purposes of This Guide

This guide is designed to help you, the county commissioner, meet the challenge of human service decision making in your county. Specifically, its purposes are to:

- describe a planning process that helps county commissioners make decisions about the use of limited resources for human services;
- describe the benefits of human service planning at the county level;
- provide an overview of various tools available to county commissioners to assist them in human service planning and decision making; and
- define and clarify the relationship between the county commissioners and others in a local human service planning and decision making process.

This guide recognizes that the decisions county commissioners make are difficult ones and that many factors are taken into account. The data and recommendations prepared by planners are just one of these factors. Others include current and anticipated state-local relations, pending legislation, tax revenues, the expressed concerns of advocacy groups and public opinion about government efficiency and effectiveness.

The planning process described in this publication is unique to human services, but it includes many of the same principles used in physical planning. This approach emphasizes goal identification, data gathering and priority setting and has been referred to as a "rational" planning model by some (usually those who stress the unpredictable aspects of intergovernmental relations and citizen group dynamics). Those who defend the rational approach are quick to point out that the intent of this type of model is not to dominate or replace the decision-making process but to improve it by adding structure and order. This is the position taken here.

Although this guide is expected to assist all county commissioners, it will be especially helpful to those who have been recently elected. Experienced commissioners will recognize much of the human service planning language; new commissioners will find the publication to be a good introduction to the basic concepts and ideas used by human services planners and administrators. Other elected officials (e.g., regional development commission members) who are involved in human services may also find this guide helpful, as may private human service organizations. You may want to refer to a companion document entitled *Human Services: A Guide to County Planning and Decision Making,* which was published by the State Planning Agency in January of 1979 for planners and administrators. It describes the various steps in the planning process in greater detail, including different ways to gather data and make decisions.

This guide is divided into three sections. The first section outlines factors that can help you make the initial decision to plan for more effective human services in your community. Next, the steps you can take to get the planning program started are discussed. The third section identifies various resources available to get the job done.

Definition of Human Services

For the purposes of this guide, **Human Services** are broadly defined as all **Public Assistance, Health, Vocational, Social and Protective Services Provided Directly to Persons in Need by Public and Private Agencies.** Within this framework the following programs mandate some type of planning activity:

- Title XX of the Social Security Act
- Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA)
- Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act
- National Health Planning and Resource Development Act
- Minnesota Community Corrections Act
- Minnesota Community Health Services Act
- Minnesota Community Mental Health and Mental Retardation Legislation
- Title III and VII of the Older Americans Act
- The Developmentally Disabled Assistance and Bill of Rights Act
- Federal Alcohol and Drug Abuse Legislation

The narrative that follows distinguishes between several levels or types of planning in human services: individual planning, operational planning, categorical planning and comprehensive (multi-program) planning (see Chapter II). These planning types reflect four generally accepted views about the nature of human services and the delivery system within which they are provided.

CHAPTER I
MAKING THE DECISION TO PLAN

What is Planning?

To put it simply, planning is a structured way of identifying where you want to go, why you want to go there and what steps you must take to arrive at the desired destination. Figure 1 provides a picture of the planning process as a continuous, dynamic set of activities. A county is free to begin its planning process at any point on the circle although many choose to start by setting goals for the county. Some counties have begun more than one planning task simultaneously. While each county must determine its own level of interest and commitment to planning, it is important to remember that the components described above are basic to any type of human service planning. How well each of these steps are carried out or how detailed they are will be determined by the resources available in the county to support the planning program.

A planning program usually results in a written plan. The plan summarizes the conclusions reached at each step of the process and provides a resource document for county commissioners and others to use in making decisions about the allocation of resources and development of programs. The major steps in the planning process are discussed in Chapter II. Listed in Figure 2, they show how each step is related to the next and how all the individual planning activities combined ultimately result in a refined set of recommendations for human services programming. Inclusion of one or more line items in the county budget, which reflect an attempt to deal with identified community problems, is a likely product of the planning process.

The Advantages of Planning

At the outset, county commissioners probably get involved in human service planning because some federal or state agency told them they had to — at the risk of losing financial support for human services. Others take the plunge hoping that it will lead to a more sensible approach for handling the multitude of requests from agencies and organizations for public dollars to support their programs. Despite these reasons, county commissioners have come to realize that a sound local planning program can benefit both the elected official and his constituents. This section discusses two of the more obvious advantages of human services planning.

HUMAN SERVICES PLANNING CAN PROVIDE A DEFENSIBLE RATIONALE FOR ALLOCATING SCARCE RESOURCES TO COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

The choices county commissioners must make regarding the allocation of public monies for human services are difficult ones. On one hand, the public demands a greater variety and quality of service; on the other, several factors, including a public demand to lower taxes, limit the dollars available for services. All this forces the county commissioner to be explicit about why he or she chose one allocation decision over another.

Human services planning can provide a defensible rationale for allocating scarce resources to community programs. Not only can it yield some measure of the needs in the community, it can also help generate public support for certain allocation decisions through the involvement of citizen groups in the planning process.

Figure 1
The Human Service Planning System

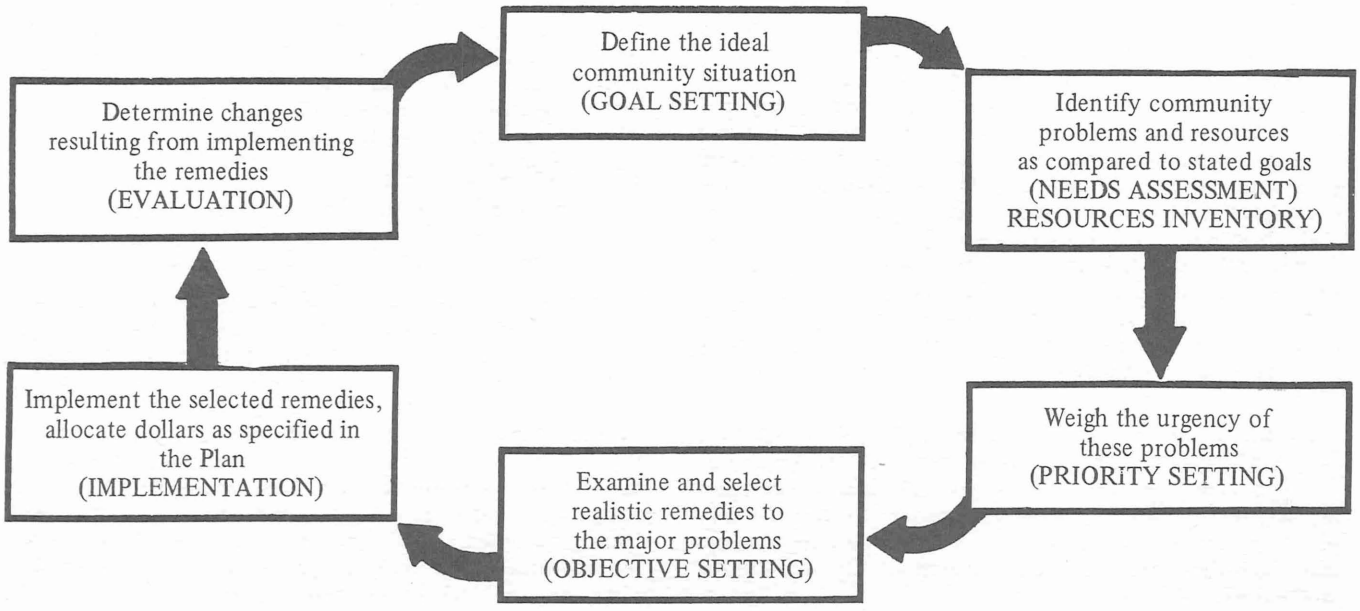


Figure 2

Steps in the Planning Process

I. The county's mission, role and responsibilities in human services are explicitly defined.
II. The need for a plan for human services is recognized.
III. How the plan is to be used (e.g., by program administrators, by county board members) is determined.
IV. The scope and content of the human services plan are agreed upon.
V. All persons, groups and organizations to have a role in the planning process are identified.
VI. Goals for county human services are agreed upon. Guidelines and standards follow.
VII. The needs of the citizens residing in the county are determined through a variety of methods, including quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques.
VIII. The needs of the citizen population are compared to the availability of accessible, quality services.
IX. Needs and service gaps are compared to established goals, guidelines and standards.
X. Priorities for resource allocation are identified.
XI. Measurable objectives are spelled out within the context of a work plan or implementation strategy.
XII. The plan is reviewed by the board of commissioners and the general public. Allocation decisions are made and a complete implementation strategy and timetable is adopted.
XIII. Programs are implemented, modified, maintained; personnel are hired, released, contracts with private providers, etc., are drawn up.
XIV. Evaluation of the planning process is completed and evaluation of new and modified programs begins.

HUMAN SERVICE PLANNING PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK FOR COUNTIES TO DEVELOP A SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM IN RESPONSE TO TOTAL COMMUNITY NEEDS

The human service delivery system at the local level has grown and developed over the past few decades in response to pressures outside the county. For the most part, legislation about human services has been so detailed that programs and solutions are in effect designed by other levels of government. As a result, commissioners often spend less time making decisions about the human service system in their county and more time ratifying the policies of state or federal funding agencies. A human service planning process, which defines goals and outlines a logical sequence of steps to reach the goals, provides the opportunity for county commissioners to "put themselves in the drivers' seat"—to guide and direct growth of the local human service delivery system in response to local problems and needs rather than external pressures. In addition, having a human service plan gives the county commissioner a documented, firm base from which he can lobby and negotiate for changes in policy at the state and federal level.

At the county level, a human services plan can be used in a variety of ways. It can be the blueprint that relates human service problems and needs to the physical needs of the community. It can bring a "people perspective" to such issues as planning and zoning, transportation and economic development, and therefore improve the overall quality of life in the community.

The human service planning process can also improve coordination among similar agencies serving the local citizens. Involvement of professionals and citizens in a continuous planning process provides the mechanism for the many agencies operating in a county to communicate and cooperate on a regular basis. By planning together, agencies can begin to define and develop inter-agency linkages. Overlapping and duplication may be eliminated and gaps in services identified.

Finally, the plan, which contains a service inventory and data on problems and needs, becomes a useful educational resource. Both human service professionals and consumers of services can use the document to describe the area in a uniform way and to eliminate confusion about who is doing what in the human service system.

Potential Problems

As one might expect, there are problems and constraints to overcome if county wide human service planning is to be successful. Five major ones are discussed below.

Ambiguity of Roles and Responsibilities. A variety of actors operate in the public and private sectors of human services. Voluntary organizations, individual practitioners, private agencies and local governmental departments all combine to deliver human services. Often the activities of these groups overlap, and the organizations sometimes find themselves in the position of competing for limited available dollars at the county level. Attempts to clarify the responsibilities of these actors may lead to resentment, even open antagonism. Also local governmental involvement in a planning program that incorporates several categories of human service often is interpreted as local governmental take-over of all service

delivery—an attempt to centralize services in the public sector. Care must be taken with each step of the planning process to assure local human service agencies and practitioners that there is ample room in the human service delivery system for a variety of service providers.

A cooperative planning effort will help clarify and perhaps resolve problems of overlapping authority and jurisdictions of agencies. Chances are good that it will improve communication and coordination among human service agencies.

Financial Constraints. Implementation of a county human service planning process requires the commitment of dollars and staff resources. It cannot be successfully accomplished by volunteer efforts alone. Unfortunately, planning activities are seldom funded by most federal and state agencies. And at the county level, there is often reluctance on the part of the county board and the citizens they represent to commit dollars to "study the problems." Primary emphasis is always on delivering services to people in need, as it should be. Without planning, however, the haphazard growth of the local human service delivery system will continue to respond to "brush-fires" and the changing directives of federal and state lawmakers. County commissioners will continue to be reactors unless they are willing to make a financial commitment to plan. Planning permits a county to exercise some control over its own destiny by defining in advance where it would like to go in human services and then charting a plan of action to get there.

Planning need not be expensive. A variety of outside resources can be tapped to provide a planning program at reasonable cost. Some options are discussed in Chapter II, including cooperative funding and staff sharing arrangements with other counties and agencies in the human service delivery system.

Political Constraints. By undertaking a human service planning program, the county commissioner becomes more accessible to citizen input, and hence more accountable. The participation of citizens—the consumers of human services—in the planning process often has the effect of raising expectations for more and better services. The county commissioner will be under increased pressure to respond to the requests (and often the demands) of constituents as well as special advocacy groups. Priority setting, which is difficult at best, might become a sensitive problem for the commissioner under these circumstances.

Decision making in the county may be further compounded by constraints brought about by existing federal, state and local rules, regulations and mandates. For example, funding sources such as Title XX mandate a set of services that must be provided as a prerequisite to any funding. Flexibility to set priorities may be seriously curtailed in some counties for this reason.

Resistance to Change. One final constraint worth noting is that any attempt to change the status quo, regardless of how positive the change may be, is likely to be met with some resistance. It is difficult and at times frightening to change course and channel energies in new directions. Human service providers who have developed workable procedures for delivering their services may be hesitant to try new approaches. Consumers of services likewise may find that habits are hard to break and may even oppose new services which are designed to provide them with greater benefits in the long run. In meeting this resistance, the county commissioner will need to exercise tact, concern and sensitivity while continuing to improve human services.

CHAPTER II
GETTING STARTED

Preplanning Activities

Implementing a human service planning process involves a series of administrative decisions referred to as preplanning activities. These activities, which are the first five steps summarized in Chapter I, include: clarifying the county's human service mission; roles and responsibilities; recognizing the need for a human service plan; determining how the plan will be used; outlining the scope and content of the plan, and identifying the persons, groups and organizations involved in the planning process. They are described in greater detail below.

After weighing the benefits and constraints, county commissioner will be in a better position to decide whether or not to implement a local human service planning process. This decision must be based on an understanding of the basic purposes of county government. Human Services represent only one element of the county's responsibilities, and human services planning constitutes an even smaller portion of the activities. At the outset it is necessary for a commissioner to define the mission, roles and responsibilities of the county's human services. These often are established by legislation, regulation, contracts or program guidelines and directives. They may also be stated in the overall county policies or the policies of the local human services agencies. It is imperative that the county clarify its relationship to other levels of government and to all major agencies and organizations providing human services. By completing this self-analysis, the county will reaffirm its reasons for being involved in human services, determine the extent to which it is required or desirable to plan, and be able to implement a planning program specifically designed to assist the county in meeting its unique responsibilities.

Once the decision to implement a human service planning program has been made, a county commissioner must then develop a clear statement of how the plan is to be used, by whom and for what purpose. This statement will be based primarily on the county's roles and responsibilities but should also take into consideration the various types or levels at which planning can occur. These levels include:

Individual Planning. Individual or patient planning is the development of the specific treatment or service plan for the individual client of any human service agency. Development of such a plan is the responsibility of the caseworker or counselor providing the service, in cooperation with the patient. Individual or patient plans can be viewed as road maps for a person's course through services, with clearly defined outcome measures for success.

Operational Planning. Operational planning includes the identification of activities necessary to develop a new set or continue an existing set of services within a specific human service program. Operational or program planning is the responsibility of each human service agency. It includes such things as identification of the services within a program, determination of staff requirements, development of the program budget, identification of appropriate location and hours of operation for the service, monitoring the program to assure quality of care and program effectiveness. Operational planning is usually conducted as a routine administrative activity of the annual budget cycle. This type of planning can be done within one section of the agency or for the whole agency. It can be done for only one service or for a whole set of related services.

Categorical Planning. Categorical planning identifies a certain problem of the population (e.g., alcoholism) or a special target group (e.g., the aged) and the need for a continuum of services to solve the problems or meet the needs in that category. Generally categorical planning is directly related to a pot of funds earmarked for the category for a specific time period and involves more than one agency.

Comprehensive (Multi-program) Planning. The focus of comprehensive planning is on the total community and the total problems and needs which must be addressed by the delivery system as a whole. Comprehensive planning includes the development of long-range goals for the community; identification of community wide problems and needs; development of priorities across program/service categories; exploration of alternative ways to solve priority problems; identification of existing and potential resources to help alleviate the problems; development of information systems and data collection procedures to facilitate planning, decision making and resource allocation in the community.

As can be seen from the above, the various types of planning require different activities. Therefore, the county should clearly define the type or level of human service planning it intends to engage in. In the past most counties have been involved in one way or another in categorical planning for specific human services. However, county responsibilities in human services are broad-based; it would follow, then, that broad-based multi-program planning would have definite advantages over a more narrowly defined planning program. A comprehensive approach to human services planning will help define gaps and duplications in services as well as strengthen the resource allocation, budgeting and program management activities of counties.

After the purpose and uses of the plan are identified, the scope of the planning activity and the content of the plan must be considered. The breadth and the level of detail reflected in the plan will be determined by both the county's role and responsibilities in the area of human services and the availability of staff and budget to satisfactorily pursue the planning activities. No doubt the human service planning responsibilities of the county far outweigh the resources available to support the planning program. Therefore careful attention must be given to the level of detail necessary.

Identifying the persons, groups and organizations that will be involved in the planning process is also a critical step, for omitting one of these "actors" can have a negative effect. Similarly, involving too many people or groups or failing to involve them in the proper way can retard progress. A later section of this guide discusses the roles of various actors. For now, we simply provide a basic list which can be adjusted in accordance with your county's particular situation.

- county commissioners
- agency administrators
- program managers
- professional associations
- professional staff
- comprehensive human services planners
- categorical planners
- operational planners
- citizen (e.g., neighborhood) groups
- citizens at large

The Steps in the Planning Process

The steps in the planning process have been summarized earlier. What follows is a description of some of the major activities in that process. (More detail can be obtained from *Human Services: A Guide to County Planning and Decision Making, January 1979.)*

Data Collection. Early in the planning process it will be necessary to collect, analyze and interpret data and information about the human service needs and resources in the county. This information is necessary to describe past, present and future human service programs and to measure the extent, type and location of problems in the county. Data can include quantitative measures (e.g., demographic data, caseload size) and qualitative measures (e.g., citizen attitude). The scope of the data collection activities will be determined by earlier county decisions about the purpose and use of the planning program. Generally, data collection is a technical staff function.

Establishing Goals, Guidelines and Standards. In this step of the process the county will establish long-range goals for the delivery of human services in the county. The goals are statements of desired outcomes, that is, the definition of where you eventually want to be or what you eventually wish to achieve in human services. These are the targets that the county will be trying to reach over the next several years. Guidelines and standards are statements that further refine the goals or establish policy for the county's human service activities. The following example may help to clarify these terms.

Goal:	Insure that all mental health services and facilities are available and accessible to residents of the county.
Guideline:	Services should be located as close to an individual's home community as possible within the constraints of quality of care and efficiency of operation.
Standard:	Mental health counseling shall be located within the county so that 90 percent of the population is within one hour's normal driving time from their homes to the outpatient service center.

The guidelines and standards can also function as yardsticks to measure progress toward the goal and be used by county commissioners as criteria for allocation decisions.

Establish Priorities. The list of problems and needs is often quite lengthy. It is important to determine which are the most pressing so that resources can be directed toward them. Priorities need to be established so that the county, its human service agencies and its citizens all know what to expect from the human service delivery system. In this way resources (whether private or public) can be channeled into clearly defined areas rather than spread over the entire range. Some ways to set priorities are discussed in the companion document to this guide.

Develop Measurable Objectives. Objectives are statements that define who is to do what to whom in what period of time. Objectives spell out the intermediate steps taken by the county to solve the most urgent problems. They should include the results to be achieved and should be specific, realistic and attainable. An example of a measurable objective is as follows:

> By January 1980, the county social service department shall establish a legal services program which will purchase attorney services for eligible low-income residents.

Develop Implementation Strategies. In developing implementation strategies, the county will identify and evaluate alternative ways that an objective can be implemented. For example, in the case of the legal services example above, the county may wish to hire its own attorney, contract with a single firm to handle the cases or merely reimburse an attorney the client chooses. The pros and cons of these alternatives will need to be looked at before a final decision is made. Once a strategy is decided upon, the county will then need to spell out the specific activities and resources necessary to carry it out.

Implement the Plan. Implementation of the plan will be accomplished by county agencies directly or indirectly through the county budget process. Depending upon the scope of the human service planning program, implementation can be accomplished in a single year or over many years. It may include only public agencies or private agencies as well. The more comprehensive a plan, the larger the number of agencies involved and the longer it takes to implement it.

Evaluate Results. Several levels of evaluation can be undertaken by the county in this step. One type of evaluation is generally conducted immediately after the plan is prepared. In this evaluation the county takes a look at how the whole planning process went and determines what needs to be changed for the next cycle. Another type of evaluation looks at the programs and services implemented in light of the goals the plan originally set out to accomplish. Did the situation improve? Was progress made? In the cyclical nature of planning, the results of the evaluation are used to define new needs and problems and the process starts all over again.

Defining Roles of the Actors in the Planning Process

In addition to identifying all relevant actors, the roles of human service providers, consumers of services, staff of human service agencies, county commissioners and other elected officials, advocacy groups and representatives of potential funding sources must be considered. Each participant brings a unique perspective. Consumer participation helps to ensure that those who ultimately stand to benefit or suffer the most from the programs and services receive adequate consideration. Likewise the experience and knowledge of human service providers are essential to develop a plan that can be implemented in the community. Involving persons and groups who are critical of existing community services has advantages. Not only will the critics be made acutely aware of the complexity of the human services delivery system, but they may reveal service gaps and duplications not seen by others. Regardless of the number and types of participants the county chooses to involve, it is imperative that each participant know what is expected of him, what his role in the planning process is and how he is expected to relate to other participants.

Role of the County Commissioner-Decision Maker

Because planning influences policy making, budgeting and decision making at the county level, county commissioners are the most important actors in the planning process. A

county commissioner has the legal and fiscal responsibility to see that human services are delivered to citizens either directly through local public agencies or indirectly through financial assistance to the private sector. The responsibilities of local elected officials in the planning process are to:

- oversee the development of the human service plan;
- hire, contract or otherwise arrange for necessary planning staff;
- appoint members to an advisory or citizens group, if appropriate, and thoroughly brief them on their responsibilities and their relationship to officials and others involved in the planning process;
- review and interpret data collected in the planning process;
- establish priorities for human service problems and needs;
- adopt the human service plan following public hearings and use it as the basis for making allocation decisions; and
- publicize the plan so that state and federal agencies and the legislature are aware of the problems and needs at the local level.

Role of Citizens-Advisors

Because their responsibilities are far-reaching and time is limited, county commissioners often appoint citizen advisory groups to explore problems and needs in greater detail and to make recommendations. These citizen groups often become the "roll-up-your-sleeves" working group, which advises the county board and its staff. The knowledge of citizen advisory groups is especially valuable in assessing community needs and in exploring different solutions. Consumers and nonconsumers alike can help answer such questions as: What are the real problems and needs? What factors contribute to these problems and needs? How large is the problem or need? What can we do about it? What will the community accept?

Role of the Planner-Facilitator

Despite the most valiant efforts of elected officials and citizen groups, planning cannot be accomplished by volunteer efforts alone. Some staff is needed to follow through on the advice of the planning participants and to collect, analyze and interpret the data and information necessary to document community problems and needs. Under the direction of the policy body, planners actually carry out the various activities of the planning process. They also have the responsibility to keep abreast of and provide elected officials with information about state and federal legislation and planning and budgeting policies that may influence human services plans. As a facilitator, the planner must be sensitive to the needs of the people and must be able to work in group settings. He must be a sensitive listener and assist group members to speak out on issues and clarify ideas discussed by the group. The planner compiles the ideas of others and puts the pieces of the puzzle, the plan, together. Planning staff should have the following skills:

- ability to work with elected officials in a supporting role;
- ability to work with other professional staff, to respect their work and be respected by them;
- ability to work effectively with citizen groups in a community setting;
- ability to communicate both orally and in writing;
- knowledge of the planning process;
- knowledge of data collection, analyses and interpretation;
- knowledge of needs assessment and program evaluation techniques;
- knowledge of local revenue sources and budgeting;
- knowledge of human service program operations; and
- good sense of humor.

CHAPTER III
RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR PLANNING IN MINNESOTA

Planning is not cheap, but it need not be expensive. Counties are often reluctant to establish a human service planning program because they feel they do not have the staff or financial resources to support it. Also, federal and state dollars needed to prepare a plan are limited. However, a variety of resources can be tapped to assist in development and operation of a county-level human service planning program. These options are outlined below.

1. Use existing agency staff. Some counties may have staff in existing public agencies who can direct their expertise to human service planning. These staff members may be assigned to assist in the planning program. Possible places to look for staff are in the social service department, planning and zoning office or recreation department.
2. Combine comprehensive (multi-program) human service planning with other categorical planning programs operating in the area (such as aging or developmental disabilities planning). The flexibility of such programs sometimes allows for funds to be diverted into the comprehensive planning effort.
3. Develop a cooperative planning program with neighboring counties that have similar interests in human services planning. Not only are the costs reduced through pooling of resources and sharing of expenses, but some programs, such as community health services, provide financial incentives for cooperative ventures. It is also important to consider the likelihood that a neighboring county will duplicate the planning efforts at a later date, causing dispersion of funds and twice the administrative costs.
4. Seek staff support from regional development commissions. RDCs in Minnesota are charged with the responsibility to prepare comprehensive plans, including human resource plans, for their multi-county planning areas. RDCs across the state differ, however, in their scope and level of human service planning. Nevertheless RDCs are often able to provide expertise to local communities, especially in the collection of existing demographic data. All RDCs offer technical assistance to counties in their planning area.
5. Seek assistance from community action agencies. Community action agencies are mandated to coordinate their programs with related services in their community and to include citizen participation in their planning process. The potential exists for local communities to cooperate with and benefit from the planning requirements.
6. Contract with private individuals, consulting firms, etc. These arrangements can be quite productive if the contract is clearly written and the contractor is supervised along the way.
7. Contact the Minnesota Counties Research Foundation. MCRF provides staff to county governments that choose not to hire their own staff for planning and other specialized services.
8. Request consultation and technical assistance from the State Planning Agency on matters relating to needs assessment, evaluation, data gathering and planning procedures.

CHAPTER IV
INTEGRATING COUNTY BUDGET PREPARATION AND HUMAN SERVICES PLANNING

The human services planning process does not end with the publication of planning documents. On the contrary, the published report signals the beginning of four related activites:

- formal presentation of the plan to both the board of county commissioners and the citizens of the community;
- county budget preparation, review and approval;
- implementation of the plan; and
- evaluation of the planning processes and products.

Formal Presentation of the Plan for Human Services. Public forums are often used to present the contents of the human services plan to the citizens of the community for its final reaction before it is formally turned over to the board of county commissioners. Even though opportunities for citizen input may have been provided throughout the entire planning process, it is usually politically wise to provide this last opportunity for critique by the general public. In addition to public forums, some counties in Minnesota have displayed the planning documents in libraries, banks and other public buildings. Summaries of the major recommendations have also appeared in local newspapers.

Since most funds for human services are tied directly to the decision-making responsibilities of county commissioners, the county plan for human services will be an invaluable tool to the board during budget deliberations. At the present time, many counties in Minnesota spend more than 60 percent of their budgets on human services programs; some larger urban counties spend even more. A plan for human services that is well written and presented to the board of commissioners will most likely be enthusiastically received. Although formal presentation of the plan usually occurs at a single board meeting, subsequent sessions for interpretation and clarification are likely to occur.

Budget Preparation, Review and Approval. Preparation of a county's budget is a complex, time-consuming activity that involves a number of tasks. Although there is variation across Minnesota's 87 counties, each county will spend some time performing the following tasks:

- development of agency-based budget documents to be submitted to the county administrator and/or county board of commissioners;
- an analysis of county finances (e.g., current balance, expected revenues, fixed expenditures, etc.);
- an analysis of past expenditures by category;
- a review of the plan(s) for county human services;
- a review of the plans for non-human services expenditure categories;
- preparation of a preliminary county budget document;
- modifications in the original county budget document on the basis of board deliberations; and
- approval of the final county budget.

Figure 3 traces both the county budget preparation process and the corresponding tasks related to the presentation and evaluation of the plan for human services. While there is no single method for integrating the budget preparation and human services planning activities, Figure 3 suggests that the plan for human services can and should be a major factor considered during budget deliberations. Conversely, the budget development process helps generate criteria for evaluating the planning document, the planning process and the implementation plan.

Implementation of the Plan for Human Services. Approval of the final county budget marks the beginning of a new chapter in the county's delivery of human services. On the basis of the new plan, contracts with service providers are established, new services may be established, existing services may be modified and personnel reassigned. Another round of the human services planning cycle has been completed.

Evaluation. When the planning document is ready for publication, an evaluation of the product's quality and the usefulness of the procedures employed to generate that product should be well under way. Were the data collection methods appropriate and useful? Did the procedures selected for establishing goals and setting priorities function as expected? Was the published document readable to both the county commissioners and the citizens? Did it contain information that was complete, relevant and accurate?

Evalution questions such as these help in at least three ways: (1) they identify ways in which the human services planning process can be streamlined in the future; (2) they help make human services planners and administrators sensitive to the information needs of the county board of commissioners and the citizens; and (3) they contribute to the development of a standardized planning procedure that, over time, will generate the some kind of information for county level decision making year after year.

After the plan for county human services is approved, criteria for evaluating the implementation of the approved plan should be formally identified. These criteria will be based upon the goals, guidelines and standards established during the planning process and, to the extent possible, should be agreed upon by the county board of commissioners, persons responsible for the planning activity and relevant citizens groups. Future human services planning activies will be enhanced by the role these evaluation criteria play in the assessment of the service delivery system.

Figure 3

Integrating County Budget Preparation and Human Services Planning

