

# Building a STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLAN

## For the Correctional Organization

By Edward D. Barlow and Joyce G. Fogg



The intent of the American Correctional Association's Building a Correctional Workforce for the 21st Century project is to advance the interests of correctional organizations in securing the workforce needed to achieve institutional goals. Related project activities and this publication are designed to help you build your capacity to better understand and respond to emerging workforce issues. Included in this, is the importance of thinking and planning more strategically.

This article and related chart is intended to help you do just that. It can be copied as is or you can download it from ACA's Web site, [www.aca.org](http://www.aca.org), or request a PDF version from Debbie Boyer, ACA Human Resources Committee chairwoman, by e-mailing her at [debbie.boyer@doc.state.ok.us](mailto:debbie.boyer@doc.state.ok.us). It is suggested that you work through the document yourself and include members of your staff in an exercise to identify areas where you can improve your strategic workforce planning.

## Strategic Workforce Imperatives

The resource development planning chart on pages 111-115 is organized around 10 strategic workforce development plan imperatives. These imperatives include major themes that have emerged from the articles presented in this edition of *Corrections Today*, which provide background and practical ideas as well as references for further study. The thought process and method of approach suggested will drive strategic action steps to close differences between a correctional agency's current condition and a desired state during the next five years. It is a strategic gap analysis of sorts, designed to lead into the formulation of an agency's more tactical and operational workforce plan.

It is suggested that you modify this tool to meet your more specific strategic workforce planning needs, and use it, minimally, on an annual basis. Although this guide encourages you to think five years out, external conditions can change that will require course correction on your workforce development planning. You are encouraged to share these modifications with Boyer, for purposes of enhancing this tool for use by other colleagues and organizations. The 10 strategic workforce development plan imperatives are:

**Organizational Readiness.** Several preconditions are considered important before effective workforce planning and results can be achieved. These include recognizing the importance of workforce planning within the organization and making a commitment to become a preferred employ-

er. It is also critical to characterize the ideal employee that not only is needed now, but in the future.

**Organizational Workforce Needs.** You are only able to achieve that which you can measure. It is imperative that you characterize the quantity and quality of the labor force you will need. This requires some consideration of anticipated turnover, retirements and changes in organizational approaches that may require modifications in personnel use.

**Labor Market Conditions.** The changing demography across the United States and in an agency's specific area will require careful and localized analysis. The traditional white male labor pool upon which corrections has relied will not be as available as it once was. This will require reaching out to and developing alternative human resources. In addition, forecasted job growth in the U.S. economy suggests workforce shortages will occur in most occupational areas. This portends growing recruitment competition among employers and within the labor pool.

**Recruitment.** Recruitment success in the future will have a strong connection to general public awareness of the importance of corrections as well as availability of corrections-related jobs and careers. Retention will also be affected by the career advancement opportunities available within the profession and the organization as well as wages, benefits and other incentives of employment. In light of competitive recruitment conditions, a variety of media and Web-based approaches will be vital along with maintaining strong relationships with organizations that prepare and guide workforce candidates.

**Retention.** Turnover has and will remain a challenging issue. It requires the development of specific strategies related to certain employee groups. Specifically, the organization needs to make sure it understands and is able to respond to the long-term employment interests of the high performers, as these individuals will also be attractive to other employers as well. A shortage in candidates within the traditional labor pool also will require the development of strategies to extend the tenure of those soon to retire in some manner.

**Training and Advancement.** The percentage of corrections professionals and executive and management positions eligible for retirement will remain high. The development of individuals for management positions will need to be accelerated. Retention and organizational performance also will be positively affected by strengthening skill development that advances staff within the organization and cross-training that supports wider use of person-

nel. New types and special interest training also may be available through partnerships with organizations in business, government and the nonprofit sector.

**Sharing a Workforce Pool.** Collaborative efforts to stabilize labor resources are growing in light of increased churning (hiring and laying off) related to shifting employer needs for workers. During lay-off conditions, good workers can be placed temporarily with other organizations. Non-core functions can be outsourced and areas of critical competencies can be shared.

**Work System Re-engineering.** Strategies to more efficiently and effectively use personnel resources will continue to be studied and applied in light of tight revenue and labor pool conditions. Automation, process improvement and alternative work arrangements will provide opportunities.

**Strategic Relationships.** An agenda of regular interaction for mentorship, best-practice identification and workforce recruitment is an essential element in a competitive workforce development environment. ACA, through this project, is intending to be a conduit of such support. Additional relationships with educational institutions and other sources of worker candidates like local workforce boards and government boards are important to prioritize and maintain.

**Human Resource Development Capacity.** The role of the human resource function within the correctional organization will grow in importance, or desired organizations goals will not be achieved. The human resources manager or personnel officer must be a member of the executive and organizational strategic planning teams. Appropriate financial resources and related support will need to be available to address the increased complexity of workforce development.

## A Collaborative Initiative

There it is — a more strategic way to think about and develop a strategic workforce plan for the correctional organization. It is supported by this special workforce edition of *Corrections Today*, ACA’s Human Resources Committee, a newsletter and a special track at each ACA conference. Building capacity for more effective workforce development planning must be an ongoing process as complexity, diversity and pace of change will characterize the workforce development environment. Your efforts along with those of other ACA members, is best advanced through collaborative efforts, which will benefit from feedback. Please share any comments relative to this chart and anything else related to this project with Boyer.

---

*Ed Barlow is president of Creating the Future Inc. (www.creatingthefuture.com), an organization dedicated to trend spotting and strategic planning consultation for more than 25 years. He is a consultant to the American Correctional Association’s Building a Correctional Workforce for the 21st Century project. For additional information, call (269) 982-1830. Joyce G. Fogg is public relations manager for the Virginia Employment Security Commission. She is chairwoman of the Advisory Committee for ACA’s Building a Correctional Workforce for the 21st Century project. She may be contacted at (804) 786-7592; jfogg@vec.state.va.us.*

Workforce Development Imperative	Current Condition	Desired State (Over Next 5 Years)	Difference Current condition Desired state	Steps to Take	Assistance Needed
I. Organizational Readiness					
Strategic plan & planning process includes human resources & director as integral components					
Leadership committed to advancing "preferred employer" conditions					
Values & celebrates a diverse staff – employee surveys and recognition					
Preferred employee profile					

Workforce Development Imperative	Current Condition	Desired State (Over Next 5 Years)	Difference Current condition Desired state	Steps to Take	Assistance Needed
<b>II. Organizational Workforce Needs</b>					
Number of employees					
Category of employees					
Qualifications of employees					
<b>III. Labor Market Conditions (local, regional, state, national)</b>					
Labor pool availability					
Competition for labor					
Comparative wages & benefits					
<b>IV. Recruitment (Internal &amp; External)</b>					
Public awareness & marketing information					
Organizational purpose & community role					
Career advancement opportunities & job descriptions					
Wages, benefits & other incentives of employment					
Recruitment materials-print, media, web-based					
Sources for distribution-schools, job centers, other professions					

Workforce Development Imperative	Current Condition	Desired State (Over Next 5 Years)	Difference Current condition Desired state	Steps to Take	Assistance Needed
<b>V. Retention</b>					
High performers					
At or near retirement					
Hard-to-find & critical competencies					
New hires					
Low performers					
<b>VI. Training and Advancement</b>					
Management & succession planning					
Job & career ladder skill - enhancement					
Cross-training					
Tuition supported advancement options					
Collaborative training opportunities					

Workforce Development Imperative	Current Condition	Desired State (Over Next 5 Years)	Difference Current condition Desired state	Steps to Take	Assistance Needed
<b>VII. Sharing a Workforce Pool</b>					
Outsourcing labor-intensive & non-core functions					
Sharing workers with other organizations					
Temporary out-placement					
<b>VIII. Work System Re-Engineering</b>					
Alternative work arrangements					
Processes & procedures					
Mechanization & automation					

Workforce Development Imperative	Current Condition	Desired State (Over Next 5 Years)	Difference Current condition Desired state	Steps to Take	Assistance Needed
<b>IX. Strategic Relationships</b>					
ACA workforce initiative					
Professional associations					
Educational Institutions & training providers					
Workforce Boards					
Federal, state, military personal management agencies					
<b>X. Human Resource Development Capacity</b>					
Workforce development planning process & procedures					
Director & Staff					
Technical assistance					
Financial resources					