

Operational and Performance Assessment Report

Prepared for:

DeKalb County, Georgia

July 21, 2025



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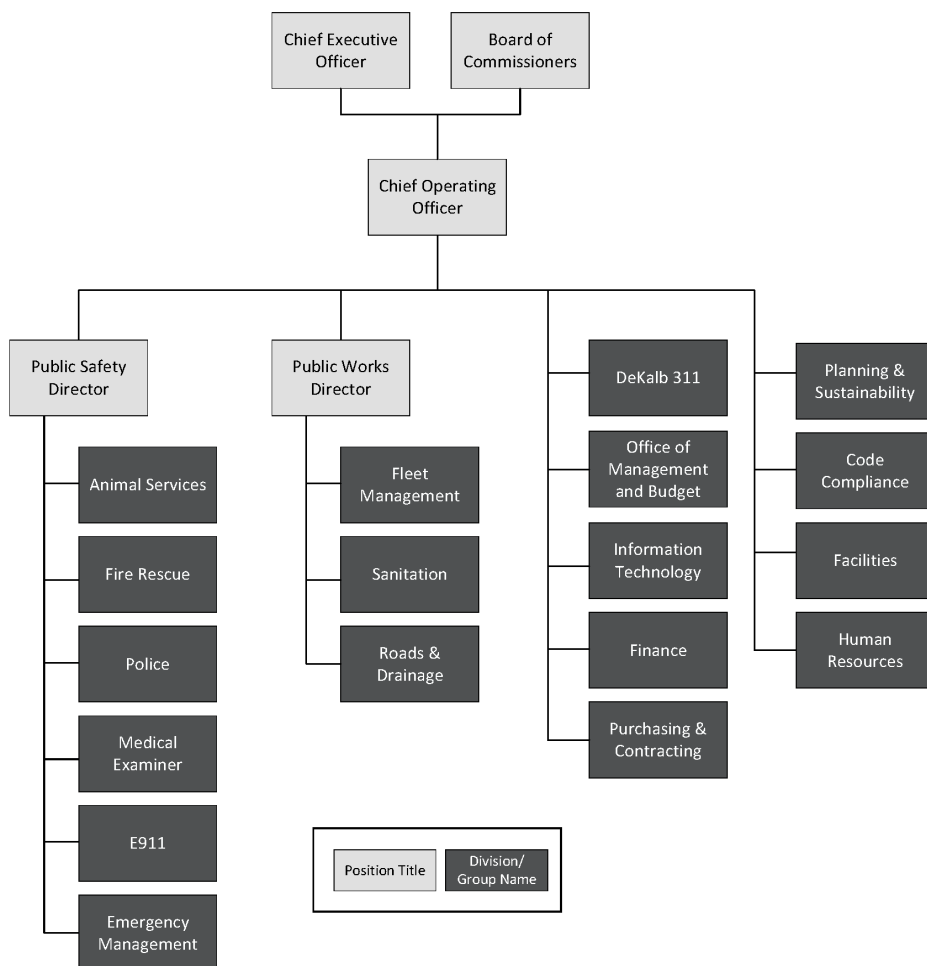
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1. Overview and Background

As part of the direction of the newly elected DeKalb County (“County”) Chief Executive Officer’s (“CEO”) initial priorities, the CEO sought to conduct an Operational and Performance Assessment (“Assessment”) of the County’s operations. The CEO engaged Mauldin & Jenkins to conduct the Operational Assessment for select County departments, including:

- DeKalb 311 Help Desk
- Animal Enforcement Services
- Code Compliance
- E911 Emergency Communications Center
- Emergency Management
- Facilities
- Finance
- Fire Rescue
- Fleet
- Human Resources & Merit System
- Innovation and Technology
- Medical Examiner’s Office
- Office of Management and Budget
- Planning & Sustainability
- Police Department
- Purchasing & Contracting
- Roads and Drainage
- Sanitation

As depicted in the organizational chart below, all in-scope County departments report to the Chief Operating Officer (“COO”). The COO, in turn, reports to both the CEO and the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners.



We commend the CEO for undertaking this valuable work, and commend her for ensuring opportunities for staff at all levels of the organization to be engaged and encouraged to share their perspectives throughout the Assessment process.

We also would like to recognize the numerous County employees throughout multiple departments and position levels who gave their time coordinating logistics, conducting interviews, providing requested information, providing tours, and allowing Mauldin & Jenkins to observe and “job shadow” certain functions.

This Assessment report identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement. This report also identifies numerous recommendations and provides a Roadmap that should be leveraged to help the County reach its goal of “Enhancing the lives and livelihood of our people” within a framework based on transparency and accountability. Implementing positive change is never easy, but by leveraging the County’s greatest asset – its employees, and by clearly articulating and communicating the rationale and benefits of the desired change, we are confident that the County can successfully continue to enhance its operations and continue to provide quality, efficient, and effective services to the residents and stakeholders of DeKalb County.

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the included recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

2. Scope and Approach

This section details the scope and approach performed by Mauldin & Jenkins to conduct the County's Operational Assessment.

Scope

The Scope included the following departments:

- DeKalb 311 Help Desk
- Animal Enforcement Services
- Code Compliance
- E911 Emergency Communications Center
- Emergency Management
- Facilities
- Finance
- Fire Rescue
- Fleet
- Human Resources & Merit System
- Innovation and Technology
- Medical Examiner's Office
- Office of Management and Budget
- Planning & Sustainability
- Police Department
- Purchasing & Contracting
- Roads and Drainage
- Sanitation

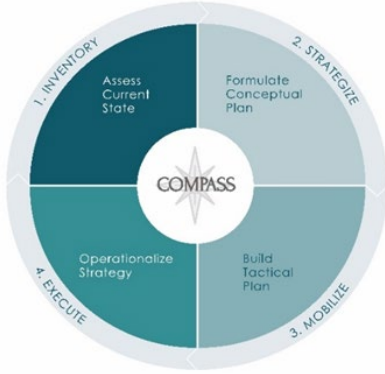
Objectives and Goals

Assessment objectives include:

- Understanding the in-scope departments':
 - Organizational structures
 - Key workflow and business processes
 - Identification of "what is working well," "what needs improvement," and "areas for potential risk or concern"
- Comparing departmental operations to leading practices
- Reviewing statutes, regulations, policies and procedures, or any other governing requirements
- Assessing the current culture of in-scope departments
- Developing meaningful recommendations to improve/enhance departmental operations
- Developing a Strategic Roadmap for County consideration

Assessment goals include:

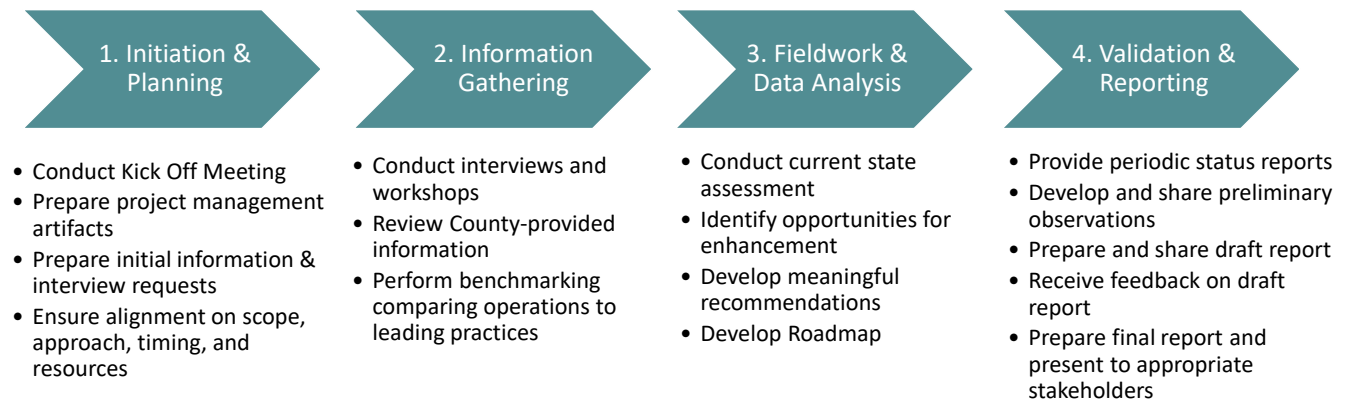
- Enhancing departmental operations and service delivery models to optimize efficiency and effectiveness
- Reducing risk and maintaining compliance
- Strengthening internal controls, policies and procedures, and governance
- Increasing transparency and accountability
- Enhancing customer service



Approach

Our approach for the Assessment was based on Mauldin & Jenkins' proprietary transformation methodology – COMPASS. The COMPASS methodology was developed based on best practices, client input, and proven project and change management activities; and served as our framework for the Assessment.

We developed a workplan for the Assessment which consisted of the following four phases:



As part of the Assessment, we performed the following key tasks to aid us in formulating our observations and recommendations:

- Requested and reviewed significant amounts of data and information such as:
 - Organization charts
 - Staffing information
 - Policies and procedures
 - Contracts
 - Strategic Initiatives
 - Performance data
 - Technology inventory
 - Other relevant information
- Conducted interviews with more than 330 County employees including in-scope department heads, key management, and front-line delivery personnel
- Conducted “walk throughs” of multiple facilities and properties
- Performed “job shadowing” observations of various functions and tasks
- Delivered bi-weekly status updates throughout the engagement

3. Departments

This section presents the current state, observations, and recommendations for all in-scope County departments. Within each departmental section, the following is described where applicable:

- Introduction
- Organization
- Strategic Priorities
- Key Duties and Responsibilities
- Guiding Documentation
- Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In
- Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition
- Department-wide Observations and Recommendations
- Conclusion

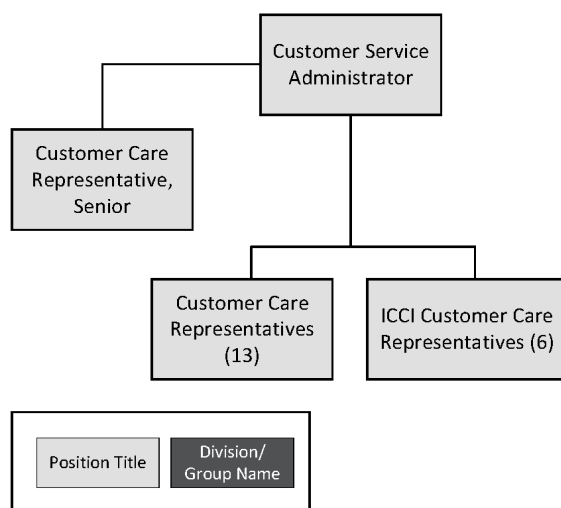
3.A DeKalb 311 Help Desk

Introduction

DeKalb 311 is the County’s Citizen Help Center, providing phone-based general information, as well as assistance in accessing some County services.

Organization

DeKalb 311 is led by a Director, who oversees 13 Customer Care Representatives (“CCRs” or “Representatives”) and a Senior Customer Care Representative (“Senior” or “Senior CCR”), as depicted in the following organizational chart.



The Senior Customer Care Representative typically focuses on non-phone duties, but during busy periods also takes calls. DeKalb 311 has historically filled vacancies using temporary staffing, converting strong performing temporary agents into full-time CCRs.

In addition to the regular Customer Care Representatives, there is also a team of six temporary agents who assist with resource identification and support for the Integrated Community Care Initiative (“ICCI”) program. As these individuals primarily provide phone-based support, and because they are hired through the temporary agency that assists with CCR placement, they are staffed within DeKalb 311. ICCI, a program launched in December of 2024 and administered by the Community Development Department, provides funding to assist households facing financial hardship in obtaining housing, or paying for rent or utilities. ICCI can provide financial assistance for the homeless, as well as for rent, rental arrears, utilities, and other housing-related expenses that help prevent evictions and promote housing stability.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

Strategic Priorities

DeKalb 311’s priority is to provide timely and responsive customer service to DeKalb County’s citizens. DeKalb 311 is available 7:30 am – 6:00 pm Monday through Friday. DeKalb 311 strives to provide a “no wrong door” approach to ensure that all callers receive assistance, even if DeKalb County is not the appropriate organization.

Assisting DeKalb County Callers

Callers can request assistance by calling the DeKalb 311 telephone number (either by dialing 311 or the County's main listed telephone number) or utilizing a form on the DeKalb County website to request services. Calling DeKalb 311 initially routes callers to an Interactive Voice Response, ("IVR") technology, allowing callers to state their requests, which can assist in routing them directly to the services they need to access. For calls that are directed to the call center, CCRs verify that the caller has contacted the right jurisdiction for their issue or concern. If not, CCRs may provide them with the contact information for the correct jurisdiction or may assist with contacting the jurisdiction directly. Customer Care Representatives can provide general information on a number of DeKalb services (such as how to file a report on a missed trash pickup, or the address for service provision), and can provide additional assistance for specific services.

DeKalb 311 may also receive calls if all call takers or lines in other departments are in use, or if someone fails to answer in other end user departments, as a number of department's phone systems roll their calls into the DeKalb 311 queue. This can cause some confusion, as the caller has directly contacted the specific department they intended to speak with, but are instead connected with a more generalized call center that may not be able to assist with their department-specific questions and the caller must be redirected to the non-answering department. In other instances, DeKalb 311 has transferred the call to the correct department, but no one answers and the caller reaches back out to DeKalb 311, hoping to receive additional assistance, alternatives, or the direct contact information for an individual, which DeKalb 311 does not have access to provide.

CCRs must create a ticket in the Oracle system for each call that they answer. They must note the reason for the call and report how they assisted the customer. Customer Care Representatives have access to a number of departmental systems, to facilitate escalating issues on behalf on callers. CCRs assist with business license applications and renewals, sanitation service issues and service requests, reporting potholes or street flooding, and other service requests. CCRs can create code compliance complaints in Infor, the County's permitting and code compliance system. Some changes in end-user department processes impact DeKalb 311's ability to provide assistance, such as a change to Code Compliance procedure which has resulted in inconsistent logging in Infor of the approval of extension for code violators to come into compliance.

Additionally, if department systems get updates or upgrades, DeKalb 311 is not involved in the testing and may not receive training on any system changes.

Some of caller's issues and service requests are submitted directly into the department's ticketing or service system; other requests are submitted via email. CCRs are responsible for tracking the status of requests they may have submitted via email, and are responsible for escalation or follow-up with the departments, to ensure the caller's need has been acknowledged and, as applicable, addressed.

Currently, communication between DeKalb 311 and other DeKalb County departments is inconsistent. There is no protocol in place for other departments to notify DeKalb 311 of issues that may result in increased call volume, or if system changes or departmental communications may result in additional questions, concerns, or issues for the CCRs to navigate. DeKalb 311 is aware of general calendars, such as when business license renewals are due, but may not know if additional information or one-time events may impact call volume, or change the nature of caller requests. Some departments provide them with advance notice and information to provide, but this process is at the discretion of the end-user department leadership.

If another department is not answering its phone lines, and calls continue to redirect to DeKalb 311, there are limited protocols in place for DeKalb 311 to contact the non-answering department to understand the issue or identify alternative information that can be provided to callers. CCRs typically notify their Executive Director, who may reach out to the end-user department for more information or clarification.

Other departments may also reach out to DeKalb 311 to request supplemental support during times when the departments want to turn off internal call receiving for group lunches, trainings, or other instances where departments want to pull staff from the phones for other purposes. DeKalb 311 is not staffed for this additional level of call volume, nor are CCRs trained on the specifics of each department's typical callers or resolution process.

To help ensure that all residents can access services and receive needed information, DeKalb 311 utilizes a third-party language line, which provides on-demand access to live translators, who can assist CCRs in communicating with callers. In recent months, access to the language line has been suspended, due to the reported utilization being well above budgeted funds and resulted in a need to evaluate the budget for continued services.

CCRs may also participate in community events hosted by other departments, such as the Police Department and the Fire and Rescue Department. They may also assist with CEO and COO initiatives, such as be asked to provide assistance and outreach at community events, or recently assisting with drives or other donation events.

COO Office Support

The Department also monitors the Chief Operating Officer ("COO") Tracker; a system that tracks requests submitted to the COO's Department for additional support and assistance, including those directly from citizens and those that may be submitted through each of the Commissioners. The COO typically submits these requests to the responsible end-user department for follow up and response, and DeKalb 311 is copied to help with visibility and ensuring timely response and resolution of issues.

ICCI Assistance

Currently DeKalb County uses a temporary staffing agency for six agents with the DeKalb 311 Call Center who receive calls from residents who want to apply for ICCI funding assistance. There is a dedicated line for ICCI callers, but many calls also come through the main DeKalb 311 line, so all CCRs are trained to perform the initial intake eligibility and provide program information. Funding for ICCI eligible residents is distributed through a number of non-profit agencies that DeKalb County has contracted with for program administration. DeKalb 311 representatives have no visibility into whether agencies currently have available funding or are taking new applications. Representatives may take calls from program applicants seeking to clarify or understand information they may have received from the non-profit agencies; representatives have no formal means to contact the agencies and no integrated case management mechanism to understand applicant status, denial criteria, or provide any information to applicants other than a flyer with contact information for the non-profit agencies and an email address that directs elsewhere in the County, that may be able to provide additional assistance.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

DeKalb 311 utilizes a knowledge base to assist CCRs is accessing the correct information to provide to callers. Currently, the Executive Director of DeKalb 311 has developed and maintains the knowledge base; there is no consistent participation from end-user departments. The Oracle ticketing system also has an internal knowledge base, which can assist with contact information and basic information for a number of DeKalb County departments and services.

When there are changes, or timely information updates/temporary changes, the Executive Director uses “huddles” to share information with the team. These huddles are offered several times throughout the day, to ensure that all CCRs receive the information.

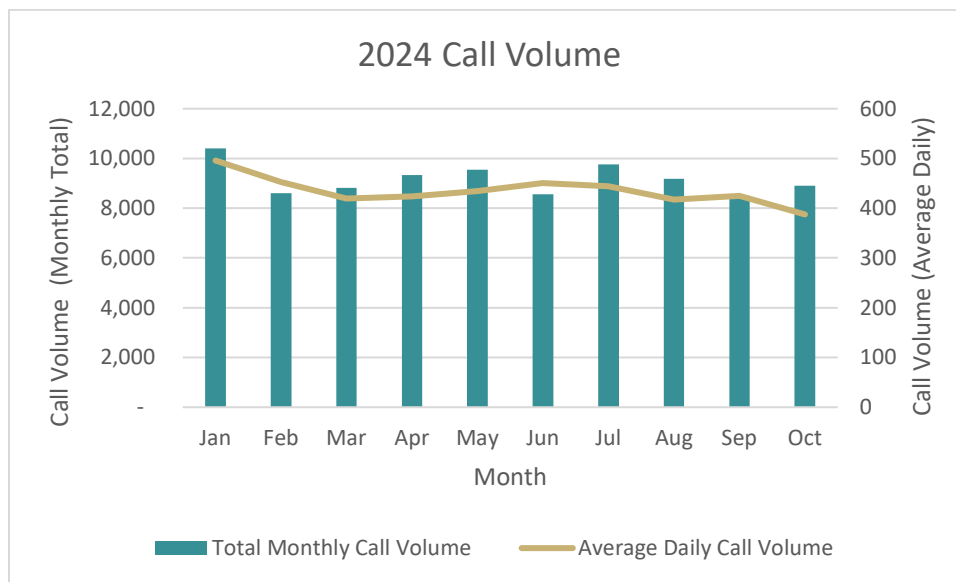
Performance Metrics/Outputs

DeKalb 311’s phone system tracks certain industry standard call-center metrics, such as average answer time, the percentage of calls answered within a certain time frame, and hold times – both for the center as a whole as well as individual CCRs. CCRs reported that the expectation is that they should be answering calls within five seconds of the calls being received into the system.

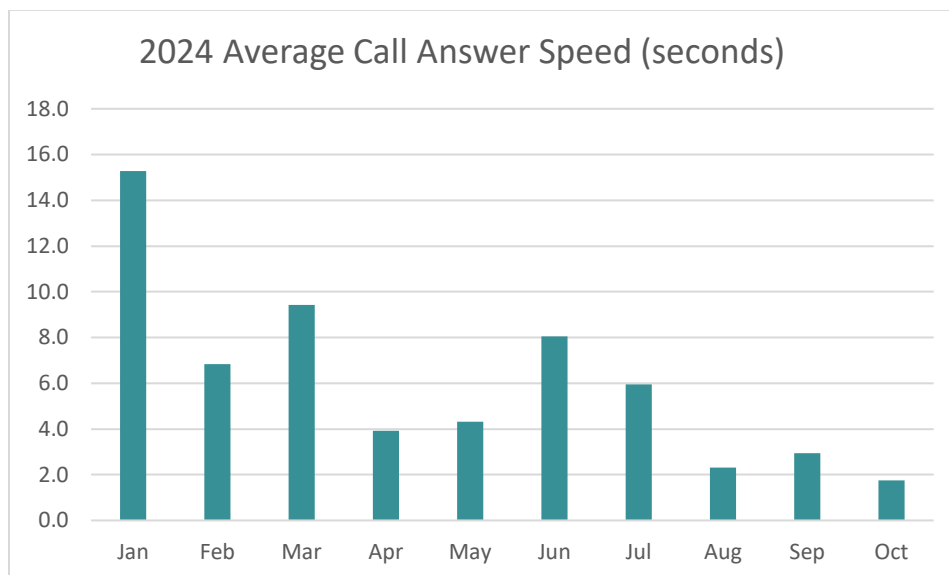
The Department answered an average of 431 calls a day in 2024. As depicted in the table below, the Department receives a higher volume of calls earlier in the week. This is likely due in part to the Department not operating on weekends, leading to a buildup of calls on Monday.

Day of the Week	Average # of Calls
Monday	491
Tuesday	449
Wednesday	436
Thursday	415
Friday	373

For 2024, the Department had some monthly fluctuation in call volume. The largest drop is from January to February, where the Department went from its highest call volume of 10,413 to its second-lowest call volume of 8,611. The largest increase is from June to July, where the Department went from its lowest call volume of 8,558 to its second-highest call volume of 9,768. Outside of these two swings, the month-to-month fluctuations are generally gradual. The table below depicts this fluctuation, with the left axis tracking total monthly call volume and the right axis tracking month-to-month averages of daily call volume.



The Department's 2024 average call answering speed fluctuates significantly month-to-month. As depicted in the graph below, January has the highest average with 15.3 seconds and October has the lowest average with 1.7 seconds. An isolated spike at the end of January is responsible for the month's unusually delayed average answering speed.



The average abandonment rate, or percentage of callers who hang up before talking to a representative, is low with an overall average of 1.58%. The average abandonment rate for a typical call center is between 5% and 8%.

The average wait time, or amount of time a caller is on the Automatic Call Distribution system before being routed to a representative, is generally stable month-to-month with an overall average of 155 seconds (2 minutes 35 seconds). The month with the highest wait time is January with an average of 193 seconds (3 minutes 13 seconds) and the month with the lowest wait time is May with an average of 136 seconds (2 minutes 16 seconds).

DeKalb 311 also has Collabrio, a call recording services, which allows for quality control reviews of calls to ensure consistent quality service provision to callers. Currently, they are not consistently using this service, nor proactively or regularly reviewing recorded calls. The Senior CCR or the Executive Director may access a live call that is running long (approximately 15 minutes or longer) to determine if the nature of the call supports the call length.

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

The Department utilizes an expectation of “the second set of eyes is the rule and not the exception” which encourages CCRs to communicate with each other, the Senior, and the Executive Director to assist in best answering questions and providing resolutions to callers.

Currently, DeKalb 311 maintains space at the Maloof Building, but the CCRs primarily work from home. If there are new CCRs to train, or events that necessitate in-office work environments, CCRs do come into the office. The current space is only designed to accommodate approximately half of the current CCRs, not including the temporary ICCI agents. Additionally, the space is not designed as call center space, which means that when a number of CCRs are there, CCRs who speak loudly may create a more challenging work environment, and some CCRs are working in open space, rather than working in cubes or dedicated areas. The current setup does not have consistent permanent technology at each station, so many CCRs are working from laptop screens, instead of having docking stations that would allow access to multiple screens or a more ergonomically friendly arrangement.

Based on interviews, employees within DeKalb 311 are proud to work for DeKalb County, and take their role seriously as the initial interaction point for many residents and stakeholders. CCRs has started developing their own resource guides to ensure that even if DeKalb County cannot provide the services a caller needs, CCRs can direct them to other non-governmental agencies that may be able to provide assistance. Also during interviews, many CCRs expressed frustration that they have limited capabilities to actually assist callers, and many times are only directing callers to other departments that they feel may not have the staffing or the focus that DeKalb 311 can offer.

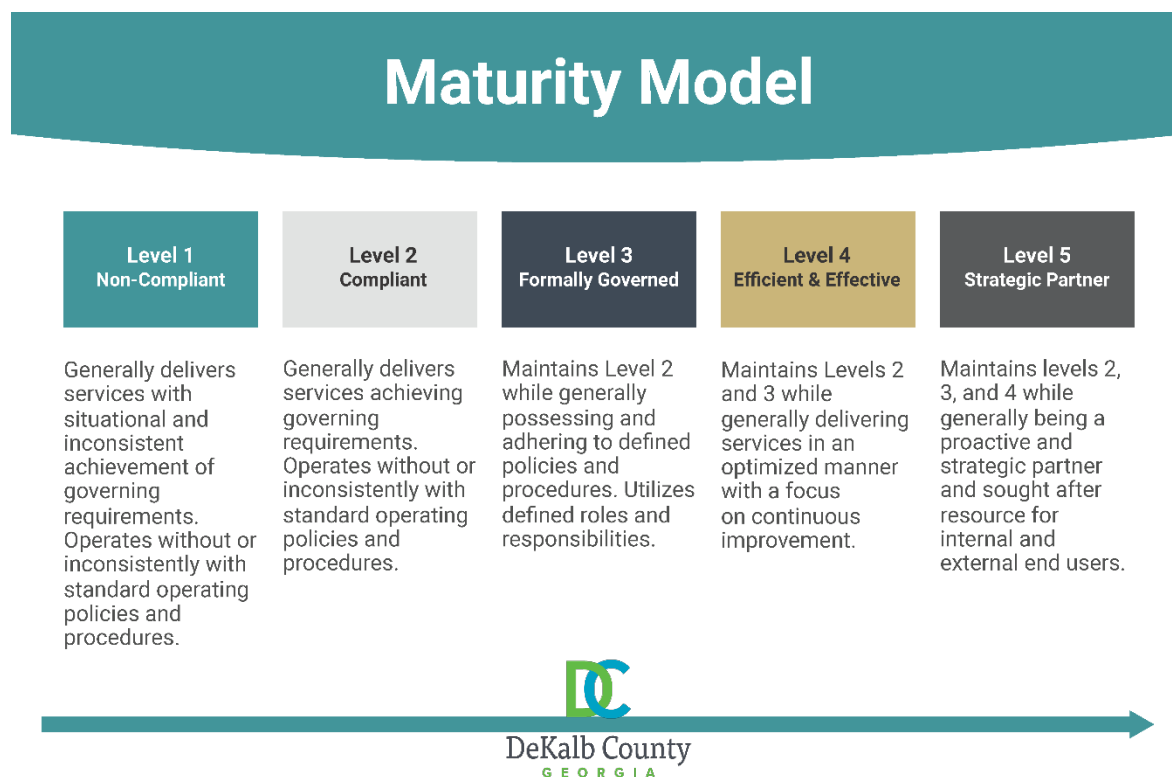
CCRs have limited escalation protocols for issues, outside of notifying their Executive Director. Based on interviews, the staff appreciate the Executive Director and their efforts on their behalf, but some noted concern about having to take everything to the Executive Director, who serves as the single point of escalation and resolution.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

DeKalb 311 has developed strong knowledge bases and resource guides, helping ensure that CCRs can provide assistance to all callers.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 3: Formally Governed.

DeKalb 311 has developed a knowledge base in addition to defined policies and procedures. The 311 Call Center emphasizes the importance of customer service, helping to ensure that all callers have a positive and helpful interaction with DeKalb County, even if the nature of the call is not within their jurisdiction. DeKalb 311 utilizes its defined roles and responsibilities, but its defined roles and responsibilities may be limited, and there may be opportunities for a more effective approach. DeKalb 311 desires to strategically work with its partner departments, but has not consistently received engagement and support from other departments to realize those goals. DeKalb 311 may also be underutilized, serving as a pass-thru center for a number of callers, rather than providing the desired assistance.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: DeKalb 311 is not positioned or resourced to meet all of its strategic priorities, nor is it positioned to serve as a robust support center or customer service mechanism for the County. DeKalb 311 has limited website presence, does not provide centralized access to quick links or frequently asked questions, and only has the ability to assist callers with a limited number of services or tasks.

Recommendation 1: If the County desires DeKalb 311 to be a value-add, one-stop shop for initial service and support to residents, DeKalb 311 needs to be expanded to meet those needs. DeKalb 311 should have a more dedicated and comprehensive web presence, providing quick links and access to on-demand ticket submission when it is convenient for the resident. Some common examples include: probation contacts, how and when to appear in court, missed sanitation pickups, bulk sanitation pickups, business license renewal, reporting road issues, and reporting water line breaks or leaks.

The County could also consider adding more self-service options, to ensure that CCR's time is value-add for the caller. DeKalb County should assess if the Oracle system currently in-use for call-taking (or an alternative, such as expanding the COO Tracker) would allow for residents to directly report issues, submit pictures and track resolution efforts. DeKalb 311 could also coordinate with DOIT to assess if chatbots could also provide on-demand assistance.

CCRs could also be leveraged to provide in-person support to residents who are not technologically savvy, especially in navigating online processes such as business license renewal. DeKalb 311 could position a staff at Planning & Sustainability or at the Maloof Center to provide real-time, hands-on support during the business license renewal period.

If DeKalb 311 is not determined to be of value as a tool for additional support and resource navigation, a more robust IVR system and more user-friendly website access could assist in navigating callers to the desired end-user department, assuming callers know who they need to contact. County departments would need to have their customer-facing staffing levels assessed, with the potential for current CCRs to be positioned in these departments as dedicated customer support assistance.

Observation 2: CCRs specifically assigned to assist with intake eligibility for ICCI have no contact with the implementing non-profit organizations, nor any regular, consistent communications with the Community Development Department to identify issues, clarify questions or confusion from callers, or get more up-to-date information on program status and available funding.

Recommendation 2: Community Development was not within the M&J scope for this project, so M&J cannot assess the systems or tracking mechanisms in place for the organizations that are directing funding to eligible residents. DeKalb 311 should work with Community Development to create a communication procedure for DeKalb 311 to report issues, concerns with communication and information dissemination, or address questions that they may be regularly receiving from callers.

Conclusion

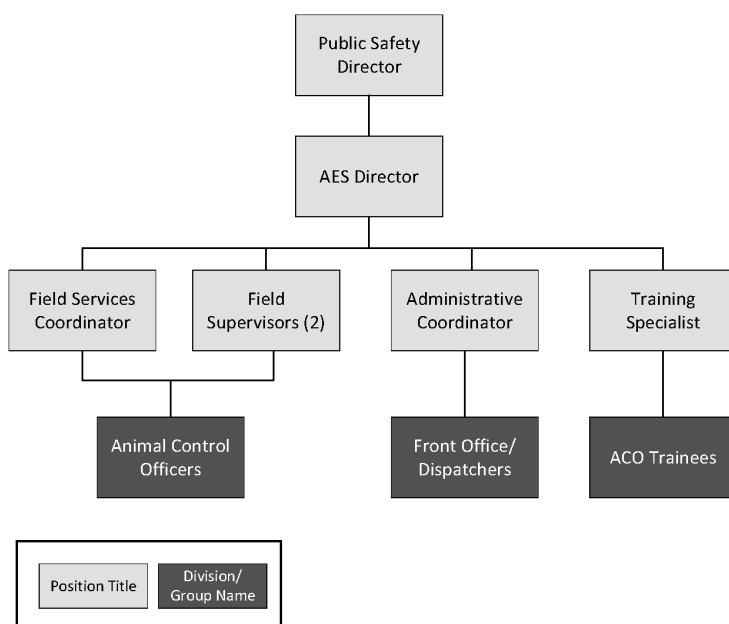
Ultimately, DeKalb 311 appears to be operating fairly well within the confines of its current responsibilities and mission. Given their limited scope and access, this may not be a strategic use of these resources, or provide a meaningful customer service experience to callers for whom DeKalb 311's responsibility areas are not the primary reason for the call. CCRs are engaged and passionate about being able to provide assistance and resources to all callers, and are frustrated with the limitations of the current circumstances. County leadership needs to decide how to best position DeKalb 311 to succeed, either through expansion of scope and support to allow them to more broadly meet customers' needs and serve as an extension of departmental customer service, or reducing their role to that of call operator, solely assisting callers in reaching the end user departments, while increasing the customer service function within impacted departments. We would like to thank Departmental leadership for their time and resources, and providing an opportunity to meet with nine employees and shadow a day of operations.

3.B Animal Enforcement Services

Introduction

Animal Enforcement Services (“AES” or “Department”) is a public safety function of the DeKalb County government responsible for addressing resident complaints related to Chapter 5 of the *Code of DeKalb County, as Revised 1988*, which pertains to the appropriate treatment and handling of animals. The Department is charged with providing care and protection of animals, education to the public on proper treatment of animals, and enforcement of ordinances related to the mitigation of cruelty of animals.

Organization



The Department is a function of the Public Safety Department. The Director of AES reports to the Public Safety Director, though the AES Director has direct oversight of the day-to-day operations of the Department. The Director supervises a Field Services Coordinator, two Field Supervisors, an Administrative Coordinator, and a Training Specialist. The Director position was filled in October 2024, having been vacant since September 2018.

Field Operations

The Field Services Coordinator position and the two Field Supervisor positions (one of which is a new position that has not yet been filled) oversee the Animal Control Officers (“ACO” or “Officer”) and field operations. The Field Services Coordinator manages the logistics for field operations, including schedule management for ACOs and reviews of equipment inventory. The Field Supervisor positions are intended to directly oversee a shift of ACOs, conduct Roll Call, and assist with investigations in the field, as required. While the Field Services Coordinator and the Field Supervisor positions use separate working titles (or functional titles) within the Department – all three positions are considered Field Supervisors in the County’s HR system, resulting in a lack of clarity as to division of responsibilities and chain of command for field staff.

The ACOs are directly responsible for responding to residents’ reports of stray animals and violations of the County’s animal-care-related ordinances. The Department does not require prior training or certifications for the ACO position, and provides all necessary training for new Officers. As part of the ongoing development of ACOs, the Department assigns the Officers a minimum of 10 hours of training annually, often through the National Animal Care & Control Association (“NACA”). Officers who have been in their position for 24 months and have achieved NACA ACO I certification are eligible for promotion to Senior Animal Control Officer (“SACO” or “Sr. Officer”), which includes an increase in salary grade. After two years in the SACO position, Sr. Officers who have achieved the NACA ACO II certification are eligible for promotion to Master Animal Control Officer (“MACO” or “Master Officer”), which includes an increase in salary grade. Of the 15 ACO/SACO/MACO positions allocated to the Department, 11 are currently filled. Prior to October 2024, only six of the field personnel roles were regularly hired for (not including the Field Supervisor/Field Services Coordinator positions).¹

Staffing Analysis

In the last five years, the Department has experienced a fairly consistent rate of turnover in Officers, Sr. Officers, and Master Officers, with a notable spike in 2022. The table below depicts the turnover rate for each year in the reviewed period.

Year	Turnover Rate
2020	21.05%
2021	21.05%
2022	66.67%
2023	16.67%
2024	22.22%

Source: Department-provided staffing data

The average turnover rate for the Department’s Officers, Sr. Officers, and Master Officers was approximately 33% between 2020 and 2024. The Department was below this average for four of the years in the reviewed period. In 2022, the Department saw higher than average turnover with five departures. Of the field personnel who departed their position within the reviewed period, the average tenure in the Department was 1,603 days (4.39 years). Of the current field personnel, as of January 2025, the average tenure in the Department is 1,945 days (5.33 years). The average headcount within the reviewed period was 8.66 field personnel.

¹ For the purpose of this report, M&J uses “Officers” to collectively refer to all three levels of Officer – ACO, SACO, and MACO, unless specific delineation is required. M&J also uses “field personnel” to collectively refer to the same three positions.

Front Office and Dispatch

The Administrative Coordinator serves as the administrative lead for the Department, with supervision of the Front Office/Dispatcher positions, which are classified as Animal Control Dispatcher (“Dispatcher”) positions by the HR Department. In addition to supervising the Dispatchers, the Administrative Coordinator conducts recruiting, processes timecards for the Department, conducts purchasing for the Department, leads corporate culture initiatives, manages special projects as assigned, and provides administrative support to the Director and other senior level positions (*e.g.*, Field Services Coordinator, Field Supervisors, and Training Specialist). Due to the level of responsibility assigned to the Administrative Coordinator, the Director stated an intent to reclassify the position to one with a higher salary grade.

The Dispatchers serve in a triple role of administrative support for field operations, customer service for the residents of DeKalb County, and radio dispatch for the ACOs. Currently, the Dispatchers are all classified at the same job level and salary grade, even though some Dispatchers have received the NACA Animal Control Dispatch certification, and one Dispatcher informally serves as a lead worker for the team. Currently, all five Dispatcher positions are filled.

Training

The Training Specialist position provides the initial training for new staff in the Department. Newly hired Animal Control Officer Trainees (“ACO Trainees”) report to the Training Specialist until certified to transition to the field – which occurs, on average, 10 weeks after starting with the Department. The majority of training for ACO Trainees occurs in an “Academy,” or classroom, setting; the classroom is located in the main room of the AES offices (which further serves as the Department’s breakroom, communal space, and entry/exit point for the facility). After the Academy training, ACO Trainees transfer to field training, which is overseen by current Officers (generally at the Sr. Officer or Master Officer level), who serve as unofficial Field Training Officers (“FTO”). Animal Control Dispatcher Trainees (“Dispatcher Trainees”) attend two weeks of Academy sessions and then transfer to general dispatcher training with dispatchers from other Public Safety functions.

While the Department’s Standard Operating Procedures (“SOP”) Manual provides a method for identifying and qualifying Officers to serve in the FTO role, the Department does not currently provide an FTO training/certification course, largely due to the limited number of field personnel positions filled prior to the last six months, or compensation incentives for serving as an FTO.

The Training Specialist position additionally participates in some recruitment efforts and serves as a public education specialist for the Department – attending community events and meetings to provide education on animal-related ordinances and leading practices for animal welfare.

DeKalb County Animal Services – Shelter

In addition to enforcement of animal-related ordinances, the Department also has limited jurisdiction over the County’s animal shelter – DeKalb County Animal Services (“DCAS” or “Shelter”). DCAS is managed by LifeLine Animal Project (“LifeLine”), a nonprofit animal welfare organization, through a County contract. AES staff noted a positive working relationship with DCAS, with regular meetings between AES and LifeLine leadership. AES staff further noted that the current contract with LifeLine has limited enforcement authority in the event an issue is raised with the Shelter’s operations. M&J did not evaluate DCAS, as the Shelter fell outside of the Assessment’s scope of services, and was not informed of any current or past issues with DCAS’ operations.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

The Department performs the following key duties and responsibilities as part of everyday operations to protect and care for the County's animals and people:

- Receipt of Complaints and Dispatch
- Incident Response
- Court Appearance

The Department's strategic priorities and initiatives are primarily focused on providing staff with the resources necessary to perform basic operations. Without a permanent Director for six years, the Department was left without strategic direction, and interim leaders (both from within and outside AES) were primarily focused on maintaining current operations. The introduction of a permanent Director has allowed the Department to focus on initiatives aimed at raising the standard of service to the level needed for the County and will eventually allow for initiatives intended to go beyond base-level service delivery and employee support.

Receipt of Complaints and Dispatch

As an overarching strategic priority, the Department aims to provide education and support to the residents of DeKalb County on the proper care and handling of animals. The education piece begins during the process of receiving complaints from residents. Residents call or email complaints into AES, or submit complaints through an online form on the Department's website. Dispatchers begin the complaint response process through a review and prioritization of complaints received, and will communicate with members of the public who provide their information along with the complaint.² In the event Dispatchers are able to identify that a complaint cannot be addressed by AES (*e.g.*, rodents in houses, dead animals on roadways, etc.), the Dispatchers connect residents with the appropriate resources (*e.g.*, Wildlife Services, Sanitation, etc.).

As Dispatchers are responsible for answering the phones and directly interacting with members of the public, the Department stresses the importance of customer service. The Department records calls with the public; calls are selected at random for review by the Administrative Coordinator on a monthly basis, who evaluates the Dispatchers' customer service performance against a scorecard. Dispatchers who do not score at least an 80 on the scorecard for their performance across all calls reviewed in a given month receive progressive disciplinary action for correcting their performance. According to the Administrative Coordinator, none of the Dispatchers have progressed to the written counseling stage, which occurs at two months of not meeting the performance standard.

For complaints related to the responsibilities of AES, the Dispatchers enter the necessary information into the Computer-Aided Dispatch ("CAD") system, which shares the incident information out to the personnel in the field. The Dispatcher assigned to the radio on a given day assigns each case in the CAD to the Officer or Officers when the Officer or Officers notifies the Dispatcher via the radio that they are in route to the case location. While an Officer is on location for a case, the Dispatcher manning the radio checks in with the Officer approximately every 15 minutes to confirm the Officer's safety.

² Complainants have the option of remaining anonymous – though the Department informs complainants that remaining anonymous eliminates the opportunity to receive updates on the complaint/case.

Dispatchers manage the radio from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Outside of those hours, the dispatching of Officers is conducted through E-911's Emergency Communications Center. ACOs asserted that the AES Dispatchers are more responsive and informative than their counterparts in the E-911 Emergency Communications Center – resulting in Officers being more prepared for incident response when dispatched by AES staff, and requiring Officers to reach out to the Emergency Communications Center via cellphone when E-911 dispatchers aren't responding via the radio.

Staff noted that prior to the appointment of the Director, Dispatchers and Officers were instructed to transition from using common radio codes (commonly known as ten-codes) to plain speech in order to mitigate confusion caused by different jurisdictions using differing variations of ten-codes. While the directive was in line with many jurisdictions' transition away from ten-codes, the directive was not consistent among DeKalb County public safety departments, resulting in AES using plain speech while other public safety functions still use ten-codes.

Incident Response

Incident response involves field personnel identifying a case in the CAD system that is within their assigned territory, and visiting the case location in order to identify violations and/or pick up stray animals reported by the public. When on scene, field personnel try to make contact with animal owners and/or the complainant to gather more information about the case and to address any violations identified by observing the location. Field personnel have the authority to enter the exterior of properties to review animals' situations, but will generally contact the jurisdiction's police department for assistance gaining entry to the interior of a property when a property owner/resident won't grant access.

If the responding Officer identifies one or more violations, they have the opportunity to provide a notice of violation or issue a citation, depending on the severity of the violation(s). If field personnel issue a notice of violation, the issuing Officer will provide the animal owner with a timeframe to bring the animal's care into compliance and will either require the owner provide evidence of compliance (*e.g.*, proof of a rabies vaccination) or the Officer will return for a re-inspection of the property. In the case of a severe violation, or repeated non-compliance, the Officer issues one or more citation, which requires the animal owner to appear in court. AES field personnel can only issue citations in unincorporated DeKalb County. For the municipal jurisdictions that AES serves, the municipal police department or DeKalb County Police Department issues the citation (which has caused confusion during cases within the municipalities as the intergovernmental agreements between DeKalb County and the various municipalities do not clearly delineate separation of responsibilities for responding to animal-related incidents, if AES is mentioned at all).³ The DeKalb County Service Delivery Strategy, a document on file with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs governing service delivery among the County and the municipalities, does not provide additional clarity.

³ Based on the information available: Chamblee, Decatur, and Doraville have their own ACOs (though the latter two call DeKalb County AES after hours); the intergovernmental agreement with Stonecrest specifically addresses AES service provision, in support of Stonecrest's Code Enforcement Department; and the intergovernmental agreement with Tucker does not address AES service provision, but the City has requested additional support from the County regarding animal-related incidents. The remaining municipalities are either not governed by an active intergovernmental agreement, or the agreement does not address animal control/enforcement service provision.

Currently, citations are handwritten, as the Department does not have purchased citation printers, which has led to inefficiencies in field personnel's time utilization when the number of citations is high.

The goal of AES is to keep animals in their homes. The Department will capture stray animals (sometimes through the efforts of multiple field personnel, if required) and will accept owner-surrendered animals, as necessary. Officers generally only seize animals in response to dangerous or vicious animal cases, bite cases, or suspected cases of animal cruelty. Field personnel bring animals picked up or seized to the Shelter, where the animals are triaged and either held pending the outcome of a case, identification of an owner, or determination of adoption eligibility. Field personnel may also transport injured animals to Saint Francis Veterinary Specialists and Emergency, based on the Officer's judgement of the severity of injury.

Severe cases include animal bites; animal neglect, cruelty, and abuse cases; and incidents including potentially dangerous or vicious animals. These severe cases often require additional investigation, as the cases can result in criminal charges. None of the Department's staff maintain Peace Officer Standards and Training ("POST") certification. Even though more experienced Officers (generally SACOs or MACOs) begin the investigations into animal neglect, cruelty, and abuse, only POST-certified personnel are authorized to conduct criminal investigations and make arrests. As a result, the DeKalb County Police Department has to assume control of investigations that may result in criminal charges, even though the Police Department does not have specific knowledge of animal-involved cases.

Bite cases and dangerous or vicious animal cases are generally handled by AES, unless the case may result in criminal charges. The Department follows specific protocols to address bites and dangerous or vicious animals, which align with the processes required by the *Code of DeKalb County, as Revised 1988*.

Field personnel are divided between two shifts: one shift operates from Sunday to Thursday, and the other Tuesday through Saturday. For each shift, personnel are divided between two rotations: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. While field personnel remain on the same shift, they switch monthly between each rotation. The Field Services Coordinator manages the field personnel schedule on a monthly basis, which accounts for planned absences and staffing shortages due to training. The Department offers overtime to field personnel on a first-come, first-served basis as needed to fill open slots. Officers are restricted to working a maximum of 14 hours in one day and 76 hours in one week. Officers noted that overtime opportunities have decreased as more ACO positions have been filled.

The process of developing the monthly schedule and providing notice of available overtime is manual, as the Department does not have a system for schedule management.

The scheduling process additionally requires the Field Services Coordinator to schedule the Department's vehicles, as the Department has more staff than vehicles, and the difference can grow larger if vehicles are undergoing maintenance. The Department currently has two additional vehicles on order, but has been informed that the industry average wait time for vehicles is two years. With plans to hire enough Officers to fully staff the Department, and several vehicles soon to reach retirement threshold (in terms of mileage, age, and condition), the Department's ability to provide all field personnel assigned to the active shift and rotation with a vehicle will become even more limited than it already is.

Currently, Officers in the evening rotation often sit at the AES facility waiting for the morning rotation Officers to return in order to exchange vehicles. The Department's older vehicles additionally provide some liability concerns for the County, with no capability for hands-free calling (which is often utilized to avoid excessive radio traffic between field personnel) and mapping using cellphones, as well as no backup cameras which can help with visibility as the view from the vehicles' in-cab rearview mirrors is blocked by the animal kennels on the back of the truck.

While the Department's SOP requires field personnel to conduct vehicle, equipment, and supply inspections at the start of every shift, the practice is not commonly followed. The SOP includes a sample vehicle maintenance checklist, but the checklist is not provided to Officers for recurring use in either paper or electronic form.

In addition to regular shifts and rotations, and overtime, the Department schedule also includes an on-call Officer, who responds to incidents between 10 p.m. and 8 a.m., as well as commonly receives after-hours calls for municipal jurisdictions. On-call shifts are for one night and the on-call Officer is only compensated if they respond to a call.

Due to the limited number of Department vehicles, the opportunity for on-call personnel to take a Department vehicle home is inconsistent – with the opportunity generally afforded more to field personnel with longer commutes. On-call personnel then have to return the vehicle to the office the next morning, regardless of whether the on-call personnel are scheduled for a shift that morning, in case the vehicle needs to be used by another Officer.

Each day an Officer is on shift, as well as during overtime and on-call shifts, each Officer completes a handwritten duty log detailing each action taken during the shift. The Officer records the time they left the AES facility, each call attended (including the address, time on site, time back in service, and disposition of the case), any breaks, any visits to the Shelter, and the time returned to the AES facility. Field personnel also use the daily log to record the starting and ending mileage of the vehicle used for the shift.

In addition to the daily log, field personnel input incident response information into two systems. Officers input a brief description of each call responded to in the CAD system, which provides field personnel in multiple public safety departments (including the DeKalb County Police Department and DeKalb County Fire Rescue Department) a summary of all incident responses at a location. Additionally, if an animal is picked up, field personnel log the animal and the case into PetPoint – DCAS' shelter-management software. PetPoint case numbers are logged in the CAD system as part of the incident summary, connecting the two reports. The two systems are not integrated, so information input into one is oftentimes duplicated in the second (as well as duplicated, to a lesser extent, in the handwritten duty log). PetPoint is not intended as an animal control reporting system and the system's use in DeKalb County is administered by LifeLine, which could potentially cause some concerns regarding access to sensitive information.

Officers reported some issues with completing reports in the field, as the laptops provided to field personnel occasionally have internet connectivity issues and are not conducive for uploading images to reports. As a result, field personnel often return to the AES facility to complete reports – though only three computers are available, which can lead to a bottleneck in report completion.

Depending on the information being input into the system, Dispatchers may assist field personnel with report entry. Dispatchers are specifically assigned input of bite reports (including quarantine dates, complainants who may be exposed or whose animals may be exposed to rabies, specimen lab sheets, and entries into the Georgia Department of Public Health's State Electronic Notifiable Disease Surveillance System). Dispatchers additionally input the handwritten citations issued by Officers into the system used by the County's solicitors in preparation for court appearances. Dispatchers occasionally come in early or stay late to complete clerical duties and are paid overtime for their additional hours (when approved by the Administrative Coordinator).

Court Appearance

Violations that result in citation, or cases that result in criminal charges, result in court appearances for the involved Officer(s), as the judicial system has final say on assessing fines (and possible jail time in the event of guilty verdicts on criminal charges). Officers attend court hearings to testify on their actions and observations during incident responses. The Field Services Coordinator attends court sessions in Officers' stead in the event the Officer related to the case is on leave or has resigned from the Department.

For cases involving potentially dangerous or vicious animals, the decision to declare an animal as dangerous or vicious must be made by a judge. Similar to other citations, the Officers and Dispatchers gather the necessary information to present the case to the judge and provide the necessary testimony and documentation to the County's solicitors. If an animal is determined to be dangerous or vicious by a judge, the animal's owner has to meet certain parameters, including obtaining a certificate of registration, arranging for a licensed veterinarian to insert a microchip into the animal for identification, maintaining insurance on the animal, confining the animal to a classified animal pen, and arranging for a licensed veterinarian to sterilize the animal. Until all appeals are exhausted and the parameters are confirmed as met by AES, the animal remains boarded by the County, either at DCAS or a private veterinarian clinic or kennel.

Department Priorities

The priorities of the Department are largely focused on providing staff with the resources necessary to provide a base level of service to the animals and residents of DeKalb County. The Department has increased recruitment and training efforts to increase field personnel beyond the six Officer positions that were regularly filled prior to the appointment of the AES Director, which allows Officers to patrol more manageable service areas and respond to incidents in a timelier manner. The Department has authorized the purchase of additional vehicles in order to increase the trucks available to field personnel and avoid field personnel sitting at the AES facility waiting on a vehicle to become available.

AES leadership has additionally stressed the importance of relocating the Department to a new facility. The Department is currently located on the rear side of the Robert T. "Bobby" Burgess Building, in the former Medical Examiner's office. AES staff do not have proximity card access to the parking lot or to the facility itself – having to put in a punch code to access each, which causes issues when the keypad to enter the parking lot is inoperable. The AES office does not have dedicated parking, with most spaces near the AES office housing police vehicles – many of which are not currently in service. The Police Department maintains evidence lockers in the parking lot that further restrict parking opportunities for AES employees and limit maneuverability for AES vehicles.

The facility itself is almost entirely windowless; only one of the offices (which houses the Training Specialist and the two Field Supervisors) has a set of small windows – no other room in the facility has an exterior view. The facility does not have air circulation or a fire suppression system, the training room doubles as the breakroom and facility entry/exit point, reports of rodent infestations are frequent, and the facility's features provide stark reminders that the offices used to house the County's morgue.

The Department's web presence and system use are largely dominated by the Shelter and the work performed by LifeLine. Department leadership recognize the importance of elevating AES on the website and through the introduction of a record management system intended for use by animal control/enforcement agencies and is not administered by an external party (*i.e.*, LifeLine).

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

The primary guiding documentation utilized by the Department is its SOP Manual, which was most recently revised (in part) in January 2022. The remaining portions of the SOP were revised between 2019 and 2021. The SOP is largely reflective of when AES was a division of the DeKalb County Police Department and frequently references resources minimally available or not available at all to AES. The SOP additionally includes outdated information on organizational structure, reference materials (*e.g.*, a decade-old version of the Police Department Employee Manual), procedures, etc.

Department management has begun the process of reviewing and updating the SOPs, with a focus on updating processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Several staff have also begun work on developing job aids or similar documents that do not rise to the level of inclusion in the SOPs, but are beneficial in helping employees conduct their duties and responsibilities.

While the SOPs have been in place for a number of years, newer staff reported not consistently receiving a copy of the SOP Manual and a lack of familiarity with some of the content contained within.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

The Department tracks a variety of input and output data related to animal enforcement, including number and types of calls for service, the intake means for animals, the outcomes of incidents, the number of incidents resolved by Dispatchers versus the number that required Officer actions, etc. The use of data to drive decisions appears to be minimal with the vast majority of data not truly capable of helping the Department evaluate its progress in successfully achieving goals and strategic priorities.

The following tables show the data most frequently collected and reported by the Department:

Historical Call Types – Single Month*

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Bite Cases	41	29	38	36
Rabies Investigations	3	0	5	9
Abandonment	18	20	30	36
Cruelty/Neglect	11	31	12	28
Dangerous Animal	4	2	0	2
Animal Owner	147	165	175	197
Livestock	7	5	15	1
Stray	480	508	308	569
Transport	6	9	1	7
Wildlife	7	14	14	43
Seizure	1	12	12	24
Other	5	4	1	2
Total	725	795	610	952

*The call type categories for the month reviewed (January) differed in 2025 from the previous years.

Methods of Intake – Single Month

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Owner Surrender	15	14	14	20	37
Stray	141	167	112	131	182
Seized/Custody	27	44	47	64	66
Wildlife In	4	11	4	22	6
Total	187	236	177	237	291

Outcome of Incidents – Single Month

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Return to Owner in Field	11	3	3	7	8
Notice to Comply Issued	15	20	20	14	22
Copy of Ordinance Provided	112	104	77	88	156
Door Card Left at Property	77	118	107	94	88
Verbal Warning Issued	51	51	38	36	106
Written Warning Issued	0	0	0	2	0
Resource Packet Provided	1	0	0	0	0
Citations Issued	53	121	104	98	41
Total	320	417	349	339	421

As visible in the tables, the data collected and reported primarily tracks actions taken, rather than metrics related to the actual performance of the Department in achieving its mission and strategic priorities.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

Staff asserted that the lack of vehicles, unsafe facility, and low pay have led to employee turnover. Officers suggested that in order to make ends meet, they are required to work overtime and/or a second (and sometimes third) job. On occasion, staff have been required to pay for certification required for promotion out of pocket, with no guarantee of reimbursement, which can limit opportunities for staff to achieve the next level in the pay structure (*i.e.*, ACO to SACO, SACO to MACO). Due to the lack of merit-based raises, promotion is viewed as the only opportunity for salary advancement, and the Department has attempted to circumvent the years-of-employment requirements for certain employees in order to advance and retain those employees. While the appointment of a Director has largely mitigated the issue of non-reimbursement for training, as the Director has developed a schedule for all staff to attend the necessary NACA training courses, morale is still tempered by cost of living concerns and the public safety raises given to the Police and Fire Rescue Departments that do not consistently extend to AES.

The Director and Administrative Coordinator have introduced initiatives aimed at improving the corporate culture and staff morale within the Department, including holiday and birthday celebrations. Staff asserted that the focus on raising morale has been successful and the culture within the Department has largely improved since the appointment of the Director. Staff expressed a positive opinion of the Department itself and the work performed by AES, but acknowledged that the challenges with the vehicles, facility, and pay limit some employees' ability to see a future in the Department.

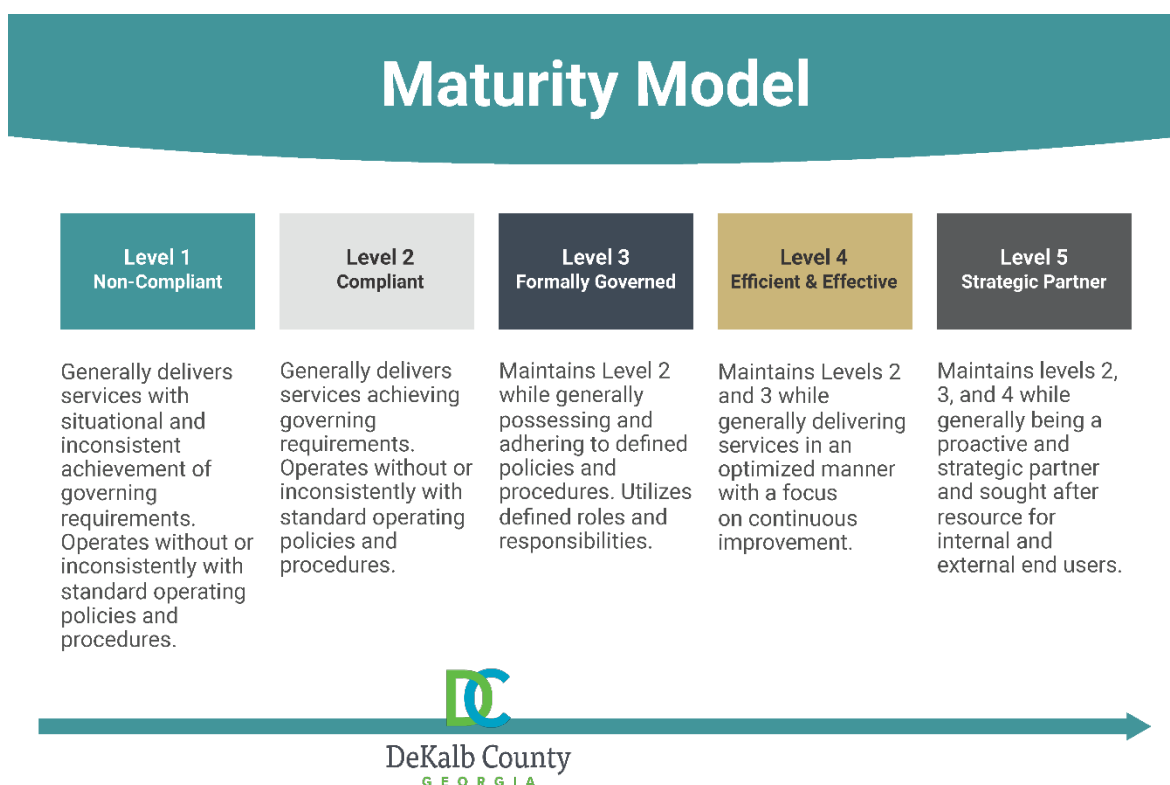
Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

The Department has introduced efforts to improve employee morale and the Department's culture through holiday and birthday celebrations, communal meals, and other team-building exercises. Additionally, the Department has stressed the importance of adequate training, and leadership has developed a schedule for all members of the Department (including supervisory positions) to obtain NACA certification up to the highest level available (ACO III for field personnel and Department leadership, and Animal Control Dispatch for Dispatchers).

The goal of the Department is to return animals to and keep animals in their homes, which is the prevalent goal within the animal control/enforcement industry. As such, Officers provide animal owners with education on ordinances, leading animal welfare practices, and resources available to ensure animals in DeKalb County remain safe and healthy. Additionally, Dispatchers are trained to resolve certain call types while on the phone with complainants, rather than dispatching field personnel, which allows Officers to focus on priority calls and mitigates unnecessary wear on Department vehicles.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 2: Compliant, bordering on Level 3: Formally Governed.

Prior to the appointment of a Director, the Department was primarily focused on continued day-to-day operations. Since the introduction of the Director, the Department has shifted to a more strategic, and future-focused mindset. Once the Department has achieved the resources necessary to set a baseline for operations and has updated the SOPs, the Department will have opportunities to move more fully into Level 3 and beyond to Level 4: Efficient & Effective.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: The Department utilizes three supervisory positions to manage field operations – a Field Services Coordinator and two Field Supervisors. All three positions are classified as Field Supervisors (regardless of the internal functional titles) and utilize the same job description, resulting in a lack of clarity as to authority over field operations and division of duties.

Recommendation 1: The Department should work with the HR Department to appropriately classify each of the three positions with supervision over field operations. The Department should additionally clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each position (even if through an internal job description, rather than a formal, County description) to clearly delineate the division of duties and provide clarity as to chain of command for field personnel.

Observation 2: The Animal Control Dispatcher job description does not require or suggest successful completion of the Animal Control Dispatch certification provided by the National Animal Care & Control Association, though the Department has assigned certification as an internal requirement for all Dispatchers. Additionally, the current job description and pay structure do not contemplate an increase in responsibilities for more senior Dispatchers, or the provision of training by more senior Dispatchers for newly hired Dispatchers.

Recommendation 2: The Department should consider working with the HR Department to add a Senior Animal Control Dispatcher classification and/or Lead Animal Control Dispatcher classification to account for increases in responsibility and certification required of longer tenured Animal Control Dispatchers.

Observation 3: The Department's training room is a shared space in the Animal Enforcement Services facility with no ability to close the space off from other parts of the facility, resulting in regular interruptions during training and the inability of staff to utilize a breakroom or other common area while the Academy is in session.

Recommendation 3: The County should consider identifying training facilities available to the entire County government that are available to departments, such as Animal Enforcement Services, that have limited to no training facilities available.

Observation 4: While the Department's Standard Operating Procedures Manual identifies means by which field personnel can be designated as Field Training Officers in charge of new recruits who have graduated from the Academy to field operations, the methodology is not implemented in practice.

Recommendation 4: The Department should identify a new methodology or confirm the current methodology for designating Field Training Officers as part of the update to the Standard Operating Procedures. The Department should provide adequate instruction to Field Training Officers and could consider incentivizing field personnel who agree to serve in the Field Training Officer capacity. The Field Training Officer designation should be regularly reviewed to ensure designated Officers are providing the level of training and oversight necessary for new recruits.

Observation 5: Field personnel noted differences in accessibility of dispatchers and relevant information provided by dispatchers between AES Dispatchers and those in the E-911 Emergency Communications Center.

Recommendation 5a: The Department should work with leadership in the E-911 Emergency Communication Center to ensure that E-911 dispatchers are trained to provide the necessary information to Animal Control Officers dispatched to incident response outside the hours worked by Animal Enforcement Services Dispatchers. Department leadership should consider communicating when field personnel voice concerns regarding limited accessibility to dispatchers to E-911 Emergency Communication Center leadership to ensure both dispatchers and Animal Control Officers are aligned on expectations of radio response times and priority of radio responses.

Recommendation 5b: The Department could consider introducing shifts for Animal Control Dispatchers, as the Department continues to fill Officer positions and the Department's call volume increases, to more fully provide radio coverage by Department staff whenever Animal Control Officers are in the field. To transition to a shift-based model, the Department would need to consider hiring additional Dispatchers and an additional supervisory or lead position.

Observation 6: The Department received instruction to transition from using ten-codes in radio communication to plain speech, in the event communication is necessary among various jurisdictions that use different variations of ten-codes. While Animal Enforcement Services has largely transitioned to plain speech, the use of ten-codes versus plain speech is inconsistent across County public safety functions.

Recommendation 6: The Public Safety Department should institute uniform guidance for radio communication and ensure that all public safety functions (including those functions related to public safety but not included in the Public Safety Department, such as Code Compliance) utilize the same method of communication – either ten-codes or plain speech.

Observation 7: The County maintains a selection of intergovernmental agreements with local municipalities, as well as files a Service Delivery Strategy document with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The documents do not consistently provide clarity as to the role of Animal Enforcement Services within each municipality and do not delineate the roles, responsibilities, and procedures required of each political subdivision as part of the animal control, enforcement, and welfare process.

Recommendation 7: The County should consider reviewing and revising the intergovernmental agreements with local municipalities, as well as establishing new intergovernmental agreements, that provide clarity on the role of DeKalb County Animal Enforcement Services within each municipal jurisdiction. The agreements should clarify the role of DeKalb County Animal Enforcement Services and local municipal departments (including animal control, code enforcement/compliance, and law enforcement departments) in the processes and procedures involved in animal control, enforcement, and welfare (such as citation issuance, investigations, and case follow-up).

Observation 8: The Department does not use portable printers to issue citations, instead requiring Animal Control Officers to hand write citations, which results in inefficient use of Officers' time. After citations are issued, Dispatchers input the citation information into the system, which is necessitated by the handwritten nature of the citations, and limits Dispatchers' availability to complete other priority tasks.

Recommendation 8: The Department should purchase portable citation printers that can connect to the Animal Control Officers' laptops, tablets, or other portable devices for more efficient citation issuance. The Department could consider reviewing the printers used by the DeKalb County Code Compliance Administration as a possible option for Animal Enforcement Services.

Observation 9: The Department handles severe cases that could result in investigations and criminal charges through the same means as all other incidents. While the utilization of more experienced Officers provides the Department with certain benefits in conducting these investigations, the cases are ultimately turned over to the DeKalb County Police Department for completion of the investigation and arrest of suspects. Severe cases, including bites, neglect, cruelty, and abuse, generally require specialized knowledge and training in order to fully conduct an investigation into the incident and achieve the most appropriate outcome in maintaining the safety of DeKalb County residents and animals. A leading practice in the animal control and enforcement industry is the employment of one or more certified peace officers who specialize in severe cases.

Recommendation 9: The Department should consider establishing one to two special operations roles that specialize in severe cases and maintain Peace Officer Standards and Training certification. The Department could consider a Cruelty and Neglect Officer position and/or a Bite Officer position to specialize in those specific incidents and oversee the cases throughout the lifecycle of the investigation (even if the respective Officer isn't the initial responding Officer for the incident). The positions could be classified as separate positions or could be classified as Master Animal Control Officer positions with a separate functional job description and title, as well as a pay incentive compensating the positions for additional responsibilities.

Observation 10: The Department has not consistently and proactively requested the purchase of new vehicles to match an increase in personnel.

Recommendation 10: The Department should coordinate with Fleet Maintenance to ensure new vehicle needs are identified when new positions are requested and/or approved. The Department should further coordinate with Fleet Maintenance and the Office of Management and Budget to ensure that the Department is reserving funds on an annual basis to cover the costs of new and replacement vehicles. The Department should consider an annual meeting with Fleet Maintenance to understand which vehicles are eligible for the Vehicle Replacement Program to assist AES with budget planning for new vehicles and/or other budget requests.

Observation 11: Several of the Department's older vehicles do not have hands-free capability for cellphone use (either calls or mapping software) and do not have backup cameras to compensate for the inability to utilize the vehicles' in-cab rearview mirrors. The lack of these tools increases the possibility of vehicular accidents and County liability.

Recommendation 11: The Department should purchase hands-free technology for vehicles, such as phone mounts, and wireless backup cameras to place on the back of the vehicles.

Observation 12: Field personnel do not regularly conduct inspections of the Department's vehicles at the start and end of their shifts, which could result in non-identification of mechanical issues or missing equipment and resources.

Recommendation 12: The Department should require daily inspections by field personnel of their assigned vehicles at the start and end of their shift, as part of an update to the Standard Operating Procedures. The Department could consider providing the Officers with a standardized checklist, either in paper or digital form, that has to be completed prior to leaving the Department's facility. The Department could further consider working with the Department of Innovation and Technology to identify an app that allows Officers to digitally complete a vehicle inspection, which would automatically notify the Department of any supplies or equipment that need to be reordered and/or notify Fleet Maintenance of mechanical issues with vehicles.

Observation 13: The Department requires field personnel to serve in an on-call capacity for one-day shifts. The Department only compensates Officers if they respond to a call. While the compensation practice is permissible under the Fair Labor Standards Act, the shift length and lack of compensation for the time spent in which Officers are limited in the activities they can conduct outside of their shift results in lowered morale and the possibility of higher turnover.

Recommendation 13: The Department should consider revising the on-call schedule to increase the length of on-call shifts, which, combined with the increase in number of field personnel, would decrease the frequency of Officers' on-call assignments. The Department should further consider compensating field personnel for their on-call shifts, regardless of incident responses. The Department could consider compensating field personnel for two hours automatically, as well as the time spent responding to calls.

Observation 14a: The Department's use of dispatch and reporting tools and systems results in duplication (and sometimes triplication) of efforts by Officers, as well as duplication of efforts between field personnel and office personnel. The systems utilized by Animal Enforcement Services are not integrated, which requires personnel to duplicate information across systems to maintain adequate records within each system.

Observation 14b: The tracking of daily activities by field personnel is done via a handwritten duty log, which staff acknowledged have not been regularly used for data collection or performance review purposes. Much of the information tracked in the duty log is duplicated in the CAD system, PetPoint, or both.

Observation 14c: The PetPoint system was not designed to serve as an incident record system for animal control/enforcement – but rather as a shelter-management software. The PetPoint account utilized by the Department is contracted through and administered by LifeLine, which limits the Department's ability to manage user access to sensitive information, cases, and investigations.

Recommendation 14: The Department should consider working with the Department of Innovation and Technology to identify a new case and records management system that the DeKalb County government can own the license to and administer. The Department should consider a system that integrates with the County's CAD system and can track field personnel's daily activities without the need for a handwritten duty log. The Department could consider piggybacking off of the records management system utilized by the Police Department to better integrate the County's public safety services.

Observation 15: The facility utilized by Animal Enforcement Services is not sufficient for the Department's operations, and it presents a variety of hazards and challenges that have affected morale and employee retention.

Recommendation 15: The County should consider investing in a new facility for Animal Enforcement Services that meets the needs of the Department (*e.g.*, parking for both employees and Department vehicles; appropriate space for the containment of animals, if necessary; a training room separate from the breakroom; etc.) The County should evaluate the pattern of calls that Officers respond to, and locate the Department in a location that best situates the Department to respond to incidents, rather than just combining the Department with the shelter facility.

Observation 16: The Department's Standard Operating Procedures Manual is outdated. The SOPs regularly reference resources, processes, and organizational structures from the period prior to Animal Enforcement Services' establishment as a department independent of the DeKalb County Police Department. While the SOPs have been updated periodically, the Manual does not fully reflect current practices in the Department, the Department's resources and organizational structure, and the direction provided to the Department. Employees expressed varying degrees of familiarity with the SOPs, which results in inconsistent adherence to the policies and procedures that are intended to govern the Department's activities.

Recommendation 16a: The Department should conduct a comprehensive refresh of the Standard Operating Procedures Manual. The updates should largely remove references to the Police Department and that department's employee manual, except in the instances Animal Enforcement Services still utilizes Police Department resources. The Animal Enforcement Services Standard Operating Procedures should be able to stand as an independent set of policies and procedures specific to the Department.

Recommendation 16b: The Department should consider providing each employee a copy of the Standard Operating Procedures Manual, in print and/or digital format, and require employees to sign a form acknowledging that they have read and understand the Standard Operating Procedures. When policies or procedures are introduced or updated, the Department should consider requiring employees to sign a form acknowledging the change. The Department could consider a resource such as Vector Solutions, which is utilized by the DeKalb County Fire Rescue Department, as a tool to publish the Manual and track acknowledgement of the Manual and changes to policy, as well as track employee's training and certifications.

Observation 17: The Department tracks a series of inputs and outputs that describe calls placed into the Department and the actions taken by Department personnel. However, the Department doesn't track performance indicators beyond those inputs and outputs that can help the Department evaluate success against strategic priorities and help the Department make data-driven decisions.

Recommendation 17: The Department should identify additional measures that include inputs, outputs, and performance indicators (such as how many actions taken by field personnel have resulted in compliance or where calls are located within the County). The Department should then track the identified measures against established standards and use the data to monitor the Department's performance, evaluate progress toward goals and strategic priorities, and support future improvements to the Department's service delivery methods (such as schedule structure and identification of patrol zones).

Conclusion

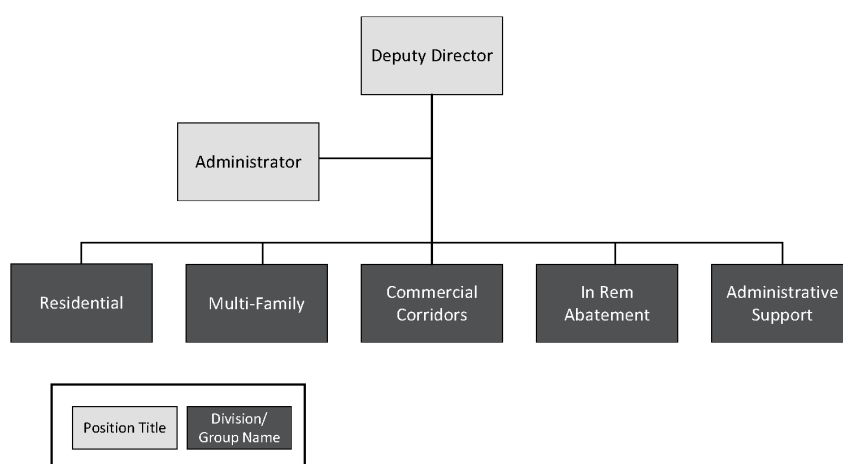
Based on the fieldwork and analysis performed during the Assessment of Animal Enforcement Services, the Department predominately understands what resources are necessary to establish a higher baseline of service for the residents and animals of DeKalb County. Once the Department has the necessary resources (*e.g.*, a full staff, more vehicles, a new facility, updated SOPs), the Department has the opportunity to begin operating more strategically and continue to raise its level of service delivery. Additional considerations, such as more streamlined report generation, utilization of leading practice software and tools currently used by other County departments, severe case specialists, and a better understanding of service delivery expectations to the municipalities, will allow the Department to be a more prominent voice in the industry and begin to provide a greater degree of education to the community. M&J is grateful to Animal Enforcement Services for its active role in the Assessment and the 10 Department personnel who participated in interviews, job shadowing, and information gathering.

3.C Code Compliance

Introduction

The DeKalb County Code Compliance Administration (“CCA” or “Department”) serves unincorporated DeKalb County through investigations of property maintenance and zoning code violations and the provision of resources and education to help residents and proprietors bring structures and properties into compliance. While this report refers to the Department as the “Code Compliance Administration,” documentation and staff frequently refer to the organization as “Code Enforcement,” the “Code Enforcement Division,” or the “Code Enforcement Unit,” as it was previously known, when the focus was on enforcement of County codes and ordinances (both as a part of the DeKalb County Police Department and as a separate department).

Organization



The Department is currently led by a Deputy Director, who has direct oversight of the Code Compliance Administrator (“Administrator”), and the supervisory positions over each of the field and administrative support teams. The County does have an open Director position posted on its employment website, though the position has been vacant since at least 2018 and is not included in any current staffing data provided by the Department.

The Administrator serves in an internal compliance role, with authority over policies and procedures (as delegated by the Deputy Director), oversight over the effectiveness of field operations, and coordination of budget development and management. The Administrator manages programs and special projects, with the support of two Special Projects Coordinator positions (one of which was in the process of being filled during the Assessment), a Fiscal Assistant position, and an Administrative Coordinator, who serves as an office manager. The Administrator position requires either certification from the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement (“GACE”)⁴ or the International Code Council (“ICC”) Property Maintenance and Housing Inspector certification.

⁴ GACE offers three levels of certification; the Administrator job description does not clarify what level is required.

Field Operations

There are six teams that form the Department's field operations: three Residential Teams, a Multi-family Team, a Commercial Corridors Team, and an In Rem Abatement Team.⁵ Each team is led by a Code Compliance Supervisor ("Supervisor"). The teams are staffed by up to nine Code Compliance Officers ("CCO" or "Officer"), oftentimes with one to two Senior Code Compliance Officers ("SCCO" or "Sr. Officer") included in that count. The In Rem Abatement Team is unique in that it is staffed solely by two Sr. Officers.⁶ While field operations are primarily conducted by Officers, Supervisors do occasionally conduct inspections in support of Officers.

The Residential Teams respond to code violation complaints at single-family residences within unincorporated DeKalb County. Each Officer is assigned specific work zones in the County, with occasional overlap in some zones by Officers on the same team. The cases managed by the Residential Teams are almost exclusively initiated through complaints received from the public.

The Multi-family Team responds to code violation complaints at multi-family residences, including apartment complexes and extended-stay hotels/motels. Similar to the Residential Teams, the Multi-family Team divides the County among the Officers, generally by zip code. While most cases managed by the Multi-family Team are initiated through complaints received from the public, the Multi-family Team also conducts sweeps of apartment complexes and extended-stay hotels/motels weekly. The location for sweeps is identified through data received from the Police Department and the Planning & Sustainability Department, with locations identified for known high crime and/or code violation levels.

The Commercial Corridors Team responds to code violation complaints at commercial and industrial properties. The Commercial Corridors Team operates primarily in high-traffic areas and in addition to responding to complaints from the public, regularly conducts sweeps of commercial areas, as well as late night operations (which are joint operations with the DeKalb County Fire Rescue, Police, and Public Health Departments). Similar to the Multi-family Team, the Commercial Corridors Team's sweeps are generally designated as high-crime and high-violation areas.

The In Rem Abatement Team was organized to assist with bringing blighted properties into compliance when the property owner cannot be identified and/or contacted. Unlike the other field operations teams, the cases assigned to the In Rem Abatement Team are transferred from other field operations teams in order to gain judicial approval for the Department to coordinate County resources to clean up and close off a property, or to demolish a blighted structure.

CCA has arranged with the HR Department to keep the Officer application permanently posted on the County's employment website, as the position comprises the vast majority of the Department's employees and experiences the highest level of turnover. The position does not require prior training or certification; candidates who have prior customer service experience are preferred.

⁵ "In rem abatement" is the legal process where the County is granted judicial permission to take action against a property itself, rather than the owner of the property, in order to address blight that has become a public health and safety concern.

⁶ For the purposes of this report, M&J uses "Officers" to collectively refer to both levels of Officer – CCO and SCCO, unless special delineation is required. M&J also uses "field personnel" to collectively refer to the same positions.

The Department provides initial training for CCOs through four weeks of office-based training to learn the County's codes and ordinances, two weeks of computer-based training to learn the systems used by the Department, and four weeks of field training with an assigned field operations team. Training is conducted by a range of Supervisors and field personnel during each of the three training phases, resulting in inconsistent training (and ultimately, inconsistent methods of addressing violations in the field). The Department does not have a position dedicated to conducting and overseeing training. When new Officers transfer to field training, the recruits are overseen by current Officers (at both the CCO and SCCO levels), who serve as unofficial Field Training Officers ("FTO"). While the Department's Employee Manual provides a method for identifying and qualifying Officers to serve in the FTO role, the Department does not currently provide an FTO training/certification course.

The job description for Sr. Officers requires Officers to achieve GACE Level III and ICC Property Maintenance and Housing Inspector certification. Unlike other departments where promotion is generally automated from one job level to the next based on time in the role and acquisition of the required certification(s), the SCCO role requires candidates to apply and interview for the role, and the Department limits the number of Sr. Officers within the Department at any given point in time. Employees asserted that the certifications requirement is often waived, with a verbal promise that a candidate will pursue the certifications upon receiving the higher title. Follow through on promises to pursue certifications is inconsistent because the Department does not have means of enforcement of the verbal agreement and because staff are frequently required to pay for training and certification out of pocket, with reimbursement only provided when staff pass the certification exam. As the costs of certification can amount to the totality of an Officer's paycheck, the cost of pursuing certifications can be prohibitive. The Department does not maintain a training policy for automatically scheduling staff for training – instead maintains a conference request policy requiring staff to take the initiative to request the certification that many other code compliance/enforcement agencies require as part of base-level training.

Employees further asserted that recent promotional opportunities have not been consistently advertised, but instead offered to staff with connections to leadership and/or who have been in the CCO role for an extended period of time, regardless of performance. As Sr. Officers are intended to serve as FTOs and as Officers in Charge in the absence of Supervisors, inconsistent promotion of employees without required certifications or a demonstrated pattern of high performance has contributed to inconsistent training and performance in the field, frustration from field personnel who did pursue the required certifications, and a necessity for lower ranking Officers to assume the responsibilities expected of the Sr. Officers.

Certain field personnel are required to work late night shifts and all field personnel are required to work a Saturday shift every one to two months. Many Officers additionally remain in the office or in the field longer than required by their eight-hour shift in order to complete work on their cases. Officers appear to inconsistently receive overtime or comp time, depending on the team they are assigned to. Saturday shifts are not eligible for either overtime or comp time – instead, as Saturday is the first day in the pay week, Officers are required to take a day off during the next week in order to avoid overtime. While the forced day off avoids Officers working more than 40 hours in a pay week, Officers are still required to work six days in a row due to the difference in the work week and pay week structures. Neither the Saturday shifts nor the late night shifts are listed as requirements in the job description posted to the County's employment website.

Administrative Support

The Administrative Support Team is led by an Administrative Support Manager, who oversees seven Administrative Specialists. The Administrative Support Team provides support for field operations, including, but not limited to, intaking complaints from the public, providing complainants and other stakeholders case updates, investigating property ownership, managing court dockets, and serving as dispatchers for Officers on the radio. Administrative Assistants are crossed trained on all functions of the team and rotate through certain responsibilities, such as Open Records Requests and court docket management, on a daily or weekly basis. For direct Officer support, the Administrative Assistants are all assigned an equal number of Officers from across the field operations teams. One Administrative Assistant is specifically assigned to the In Rem Abatement Team.

Prior to 2024, the Administrative Assistants were each permanently assigned to specific responsibilities and/or teams, with limited to no cross training. As a result, certain responsibilities are still occasionally inconsistent – particularly Administrative Assistants regularly checking in with Officers who are on site at the location of reported violations. Leading practice is that any position dispatching field personnel (whether code compliance/enforcement, law enforcement, animal control/enforcement, etc.) to a private residence or business request confirmation of the field personnel's safety and location approximately every 15 minutes.

The Administrative Assistant position does not have any opportunities for promotional or salary growth. The lack of growth results in lack of clarity as to temporary leadership over the Administrative Support Team when the Administrative Support Manager is out of the office, as all of the Administrative Assistants hold the same classification, even though several informally have assumed more senior responsibilities.

The current Administrative Support Manager transitioned into the position on a temporary, and then later permanent basis, from one of the Special Projects Coordinator positions, and has maintained many of the responsibilities assigned to their former position in the absence of a second Special Projects Coordinator.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

The Department maintains a primary priority, code compliance within unincorporated DeKalb County, with a secondary goal (enforcement through court) functioning as a subset of its primary priority. Department leadership largely rely on the supervisory positions over each of the teams to determine any strategic initiatives or activities for their respective team, with little overall supervision, accountability, or strategic direction for the Department as a whole.

The Department's primary priority is to bring properties into compliance with maintenance and zoning codes and ordinances. In order to achieve this priority, CCA promotes the provision of education and resources to property owners and residents in DeKalb County. The Department attends community meetings to familiarize residents with the Officers who service their neighborhoods, as well as with the codes and ordinances that govern their properties.

While compliance through education and resources is an excellent means of helping communities grow, develop a sense of accountability, and increase pride in ownership, code compliance and code enforcement functions walk a thin line of encouraging compliance without negatively impacting enforcement and public safety. The DeKalb County CCA approach is at risk of encouraging compliance at the expense of enforcement and public safety, and staff asserted that the Department's priority of education can conflict with expectations from County leadership and community stakeholders to enforce codes and mitigate blight.

Code Compliance

A code compliance or code enforcement function does not need to be part of a public safety department to successfully function as a component of public safety; however, in DeKalb County, the employees of CCA are visibly underprepared to enter potentially threatening situations due to a lack of safety equipment, an organizational structure built on inconsistent hiring and promotional practices, limited interdepartmental coordination and communication, inconsistent training, and a lack of true standard operating procedures ("SOP"). The Department's Employee Manual is intended, in part, to serve as the Department's SOPs, but has seemingly not been comprehensively updated since November 2019 and refers to CCA by a variety of different organizational names (primarily enforcement-related), resulting in outdated and contradictory information. Furthermore, the version of the Employee Manual provided to M&J did not include the chapter on code enforcement, which is intended to serve as the SOPs for field operations.

As the Code Compliance Administration emphasizes education and is not organized as a public safety function, the Department does not have access to equipment or resources provided to the public safety departments within the County government, including the Computer-Aided Dispatch ("CAD") system and bulletproof vests or other personal protective equipment. Without access to the CAD system, Officers are not able to research instances of past responses to incidents at County addresses input by other public safety personnel. As a result, CCOs are reporting with no knowledge or preparation to properties where active law enforcement investigations are ongoing or where police were recently involved in the exchange of gunfire with armed suspects. While CCOs understand that they cannot ignore the cases reported for these properties, having access to the CAD system can allow the Department to require police protection and can allow for Officers to don protective equipment prior to arriving on site. The late night operations conducted by the Commercial Corridors team in conjunction with public safety departments places CCOs on the frontline of raids with limited preparation and protection. CCOs suggested that they feel the need to decrease immediate visibility of their badges, as the badge can be misinterpreted as one representing law enforcement. While the Department's staff are not conducting the same degree of life-saving activities as police officers, firefighters, or emergency medical technicians, the ability of Officers to protect themselves and enforce the County's property maintenance and zoning codes and ordinances can help save lives through identification of dangerous structures, illegal uses of structures, and other safety hazards.

The equipment that is provided to field personnel appears to oftentimes be haphazardly procured without consideration for the Department's overall technology infrastructure. The Department purchased a selection of new laptops for field personnel, but were never distributed for use because the system utilized for case management (Infor Public Sector Suite, also known as Hansen) wasn't operable on the laptops. A new set of tablets were being distributed while M&J was on site with the Department to replace the older laptops – however both M&J staff and Department personnel noted that neither the new tablets nor the unused laptops fit the mounts installed in each of the Department's vehicles.

Enforcement through Court

While responding to code violation complaints, Officers have the option of issuing either a Notice of Violation (followed by a Final Notice of Violation after a re-inspection) or a citation based on each Officer's judgement. As a result of inconsistent training and the lack of true SOPs for field operations, Officers inconsistently issue citations to property owners – some CCOs issue a citation for each instance of the same violation noted (*e.g.*, inoperable vehicle), while others issue one citation per type of violation.

Citations issued are heard in the DeKalb County Magistrate Court. While all Officers and Supervisors are involved in the presentation of cases in the Magistrate Court, one Supervisor is responsible for tracking all statistics and outcomes related to court cases – fines assessed, cases dismissed, non-appearances by Officers and property owners, etc. The Department dedicates a minimum of one day each week to court appearances due to the high volume of cases, but does not maintain a position dedicated to managing court-related responsibilities.

Department employees expressed frustration with trying to enforce the County's codes and ordinances through Magistrate Court appearances. The fee schedule assessed for violations does not offer enough incentive for many businesses (especially property management, short-term rental companies, and real estate co-living management companies) to address violations. Repeat offender fines similarly do not incentivize property owners to address violations. Without proper incentivization, property owners frequently ignore repeated citations as the required fixes cost more than the fines assessed.

Additionally, Officers asserted that cases are frequently dismissed, oftentimes because property owners claim a lack of funds or a similar inability to complete the required fix. The Department doesn't control court decisions, but has to field complaints from the public when violations are not addressed due to cases being dismissed.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

The Employee Manual serves as the Department's guiding documentation, even though it hasn't been comprehensively updated since November 2019. The document presents numerous contradictions and outdated information, including the name of the Department, as well as references to resources previously available through the DeKalb County Police Department. The table of contents does not match the actual content for several chapters, and the entire chapter for field operations has been removed from the manual but remains in the table of contents.

New policies issued since the November 2019 update have been appended onto the end of the Employee Manual in memorandum form, rather than updates made to the chapters and sections affected by the new policies. New policies are issued with statements of understanding that employees are expected to sign acknowledging receipt and understanding of the policies. Staff asserted that policy additions and updates are haphazard, with policies issued retroactively (for example, though the Saturday shift was implemented several years ago, the policy requiring compliance with the schedule was not issued until February 2025).

The Employee Manual does not contemplate quality assurance/quality control (“QA/QC”) reviews of work performed by employees – particularly inspection reports compiled by field personnel. The lack of a QA/QC function has further resulted in inconsistent application of the policies and procedures – both those in the Employee Manual and those not documented – by Department staff.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department collects a large variety of data – including inputs, outputs, and outcomes – related to the violations reported, identified, and cited. Reports provided for calendar years 2022 through 2024 included numerous tables and graphs presenting data on the performance of each field operations team, the Administrative Support Team, and the Department overall. Sample data included in monthly and annual reports include the following tables and graphics:

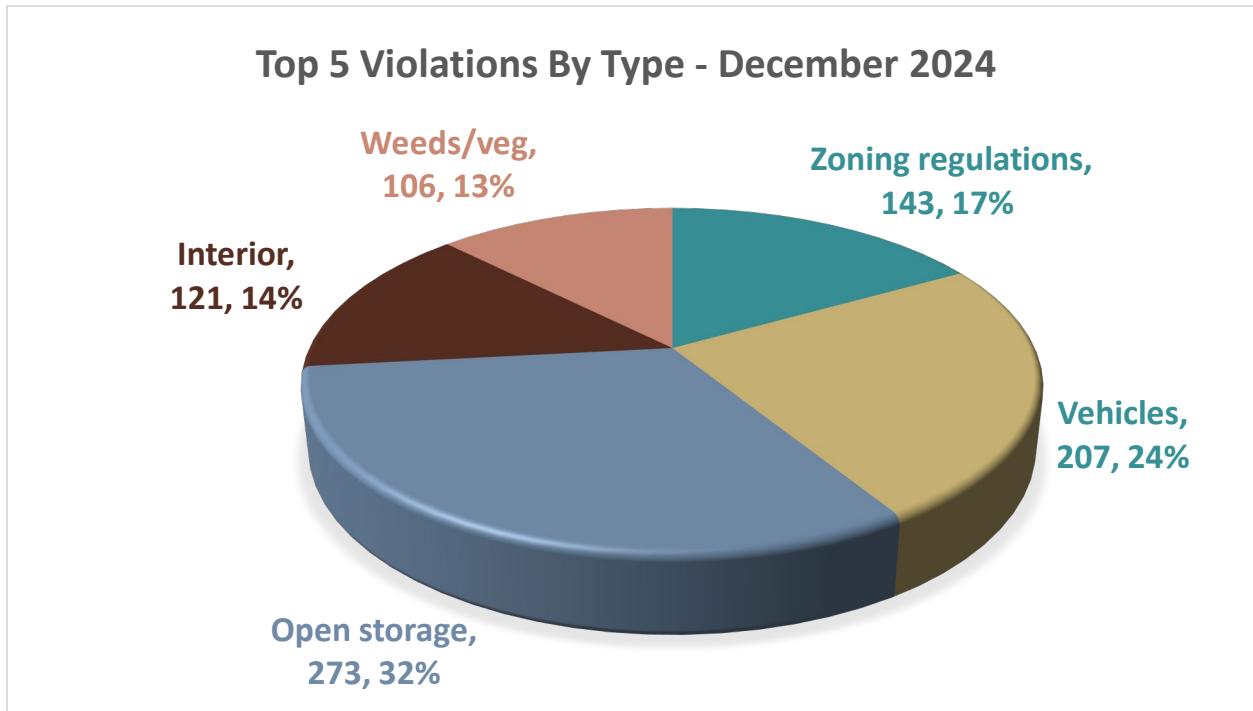
Court Activity – Year over Year⁷					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of Cases	5,786	3,681	6,004	6,974	8,682
Fines Collected	\$158,800	\$253,870	\$448,750	\$473,150	\$551,030
Fines Suspended	\$3,777	\$14,750	\$31,950	\$26,627	\$26,800
Number of Cases Reset	25	1,689	2,959	5,514	5,002
Number of Cases Dismissed	25	75	170	782	1,225
Number of Cases Resolved	940	1,675	2,235	19,860 ⁸	3,320
Failure to Appear Cases	5,786 ⁹	453	462	28	1,047

⁷ M&J notes that the number of cases is not equivalent to the sum of number of cases reset, number of cases dismissed, number of cases resolved, and failure to appear cases. The figures in the bottom four lines can include duplicated cases, as well as cases that extended from one year to the next. For example, a case may have been initiated in 2023, but was not resolved until 2024 – resulting in the case being factored into the 2023 number of cases figure and the 2024 number of cases resolved figure. In another example, a case may have been initiated in 2024, reset once, and then ultimately dismissed – resulting in the case being factored into the number of cases figure, number of cases reset figure, and number of cases dismissed figure. The number of cases figure should be read as number of cases initiated, rather than a total number of cases.

⁸ M&J believes this figure is a result of the backlog in cases caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and a transition in systems used by the Planning & Sustainability Department and Code Compliance Administration, but cannot confirm this determination, as the data was presented without context from the Department.

⁹ M&J believes this figure is a result of the Covid-19 pandemic restricting in-person court appearances, but cannot confirm this determination, as the data was presented without context from the Department.

Source: Department-provided 2024 Total Activity Report



Source: Department-provided December 2024 Report Draft

Staff asserted that over time, the dissemination of reports throughout the Department has become less frequent. Staff further asserted that while the data is collected, they do not believe Department is using the data in the decision-making process. M&J staff couldn't identify instances in which strategic priorities were the result of data-driven decisions.

While the Department issued a new policy in 2023 establishing priority inspection levels and the timeframe for which priority inspections are to be completed, the Department does not appear to track or report on compliance with those performance standards.

The December 2024 report draft listed measurable objectives and standards for each of the field operations teams, as well as a Department-wide objective, along with year-to-date progress toward achieving the objectives, as displayed in the following table:

Year-to-date Accomplishments Against Objectives – 2024 Annual Report

Team	Objective	Year-to-date Progress
Residential & In Rem Abatement	Submit 30 residential properties to the Law Department for demolition through the In Rem process	• 22 properties submitted • 17 properties demolished • Community Development allocated funding for demolitions
	Submit 30 residential properties to the Law Department for abatement through the In Rem process	• 15 properties submitted • 29 properties abated
Multi-family	Complete 2 multi-family property sweeps per month	• 64 sweeps completed • 594 citations issued • \$379,978 collected in fines
	Complete 2 extended-stay hotel/motel sweeps per month	• 11 sweeps completed • 112 citations issued • \$28,000 collected in fines
Commercial Corridors	Complete 3 corridor sweeps total for the year	• 35 sweeps completed • 486 citations issued • \$119,534 collected in fines
Department-wide	Complete 1 County-wide sign sweep per month	• 11 sweeps completed • 33,898 lbs./17.6 tons collected • Additional signs collected by Keep DeKalb Beautiful crews and officers through Operation Clean Sweep initiative

Source: Department-provided 2024 Annual Report Draft

The objectives were the same in 2023, with similar patterns of which objectives were exceeded, which were greatly exceeded, and which were not met. While the Department has tracked the objectives throughout the year, the Department hasn't adjusted objectives or performance expectations based on historical data.

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

Department employees commented to M&J staff that they enjoy the work they perform and appreciate the importance of the Department's mission. CCA staff noted that employees generally maintain good working relationships with one another and most employees are frequently willing to answer questions and provide support for fellow employees, when requested.

M&J noted, however, divisions between the field operations teams. Field operations teams appear somewhat unfamiliar with the workloads and responsibilities of other teams, which can lead to a degree of resentment toward staff in other operational areas and can give Officers the impression that their work ethic is higher than that of Officers on other operational teams. Better communication from Department leadership and better transparency into teams' operations and expectations may help alleviate the frustrations.

Overall, communication from Department leadership is lacking in CCA – especially in-person communication. Department staff noted that the Deputy Director does not interact with most employees on a regular or meaningful basis, which, coupled with the perception of inconsistent promotional opportunities, has resulted in staff concerns of favoritism within the Department. Based on M&J's observations, CCA employees have limited transparency into the overall operations of the Department and the decision-making process, which has resulted in frustration and has anecdotally resulted in higher-than-necessary turnover in field operations. Department staff asserted that a significant number of new policy memos was issued in the first quarter of 2025 with no communication from leadership, which resulted in staff feeling overwhelmed and underinformed.¹⁰ The Department does not conduct Roll Call at the beginning of shifts and does not have regularly occurring meetings in which leadership communicate to Officers and/or Administrative Assistants, though several teams have implemented internal meetings on a regular or as-needed basis.

Communication with other departments additionally appears inconsistent. CCA field operations teams conduct sweeps with a selection of departments (*e.g.*, Fire Rescue, Police, and Public Health) and rely on certain other departments for resources, information, and enforcement of ordinances not related to property management and zoning (*e.g.*, Animal Enforcement Services, Planning & Sustainability, Sanitation). The Training Conference Request Policy (which is not included in the Employee Manual) encourages inter-departmental training and includes training provided by several DeKalb County departments as in-service training for CCOs. However, CCA staff asserted that communication with other departments is limited, and support is only provided by other departments on request (oftentimes with a delay between the request and the provision of support). Additionally, CCA staff asserted that decisions and processes made by other departments appear inconsistent and result in challenges for the conduct of CCOs' daily activities (*e.g.*, business licenses not being input into Infor Public Service Suite correctly, inconsistent or changing requirements for permitting). The lack of regular communications and training among related departments has resulted in questions and frustration regarding inter-department processes and decision-making.

¹⁰ M&J was not provided with the referenced policy memos, so could not validate the assertion. However, the assertion was made in multiple independent interviews and group interviews, indicating increased likelihood of validity.

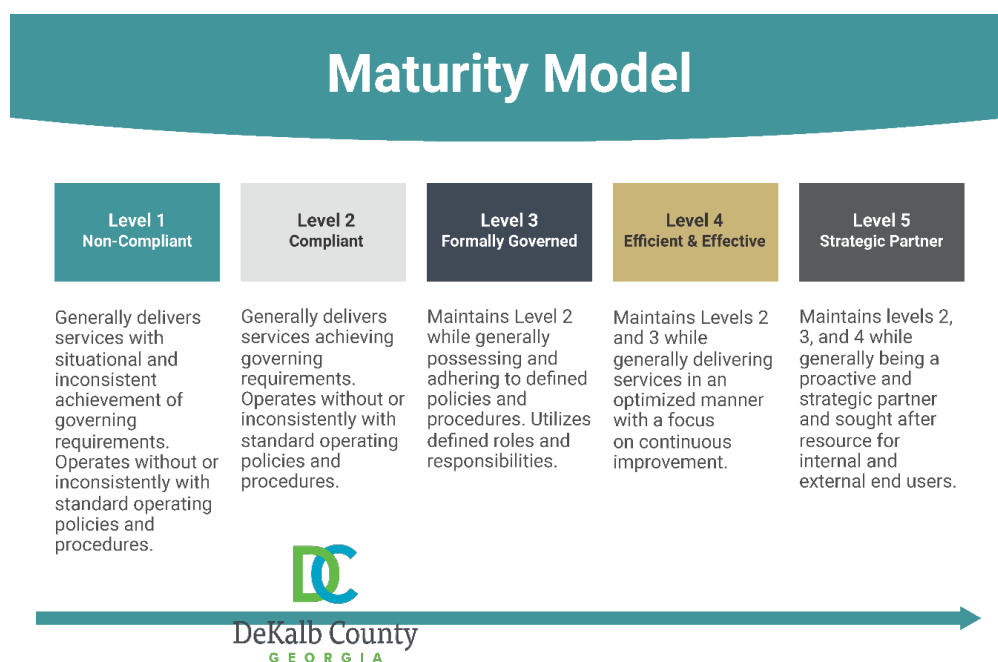
Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

As part of service delivery to the residents and property owners of DeKalb County, the Department has heavily emphasized the importance of customer service. Code enforcement/compliance organizations frequently employ former law enforcement and military personnel, which is true of DeKalb County CCA. But the Department has additionally emphasized the recruitment of employees with excellent customer service backgrounds and skillsets – largely from the food service and retail industries – in order to encourage and train Officers to interact with members of the public in a professional and service-minded manner.

The Department’s development of a field operations team exclusively dedicated to nuisance abatement through the in rem process is a leading practice to address blight in communities when no other remediation is available. The process has not been consistently adopted by code enforcement/compliance organizations throughout Georgia (including in the metro Atlanta region) yet, so the emphasis within the Department demonstrates the County’s dedication to mitigating blight.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department’s maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 2: Compliant.

The Department delivers services to the County with a strong emphasis on customer service and education, but does so with outdated and inconsistently applied SOPs. The absence of a comprehensive review of the Employee Manual, coupled with a lack of communication from Department leadership, has resulted in notable differences between field operations teams, inconsistent training, and a visible juxtaposition between compliance efforts and enforcement efforts.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: While the Department's emphasis on serving as an educational department to encourage compliance is a benefit to community growth and development, the Department may be doing so at the expense of enforcement. The responsibilities of Code Compliance Officers place staff in dangerous situations without the resources, technology, and equipment to protect themselves and to fully protect the public from hazards caused by code violations. Officers are frequently on the front lines of public safety operations without the same protective gear, respect, and pay as employees in the Public Safety Department.

Recommendation 1a: The County should consider moving the Code Compliance Administration into the Public Safety Department, with the head of CCA (either the current Deputy Director position or the vacant Director position, when filled) reporting to the Public Safety Director. Officers should be recognized as public safety personnel and receive similar resources, as appropriate, as other public safety employees.

Recommendation 1b: The Department should utilize the CAD system for Officer dispatch, with Administrative Assistants (or any future personnel assigned dispatch duties for the Department) conducting radio safety checks of on-scene Officers approximately every 15 minutes. The Department should have the same access to incident response logs as any other County function that responds to private residences and businesses.

Recommendation 1c: The Department should purchase and issue personal protective equipment to field personnel, including tactical vests, body cameras, and high-powered flashlights, for use during on-scene inspections. The Department can prioritize the timeline for issuance of equipment based on the types and locations of inspections, but should develop a plan for Department-wide issuance.

Observation 2: The Department does not maintain a formal training infrastructure with one or more staff primarily or solely dedicated to new employee training and/or continuing education. While the Department's Employee Manual identifies a means by which field personnel can be designated as Field Training Officers in charge of new recruits who have graduated from classroom-based training to field operations, the methodology is not implemented in practice. The Department's only other policy related to training provides procedures for employees to request the opportunity to attend training (often through reimbursement, which can be cost prohibitive for employees), but does not establish a training schedule or standards for ongoing training and recertification. The training conference attendance policy is not codified in the Employee Manual. The lack of training infrastructure and policies results in inconsistent training for new and experienced employees, and inconsistent conduct of duties and responsibilities.

Recommendation 2a: The Department should consider establishing one or more positions dedicated to training. The position(s) should develop a standardized training curriculum for new employees (both field operations and administrative) that encompasses the current process of book-based training, computer-based training, and field-based training. As the Department settles into a routine for new employee training, training staff could begin to serve in a secondary public education role.

Recommendation 2b: The Department should identify a new methodology or confirm the current methodology for designating Field Training Officers. The Department should provide adequate instruction to Field Training Officers and could consider incentivizing field personnel who agree to serve in the Field Training Officer capacity. The Field Training Officer designation should be regularly reviewed to ensure designated Officers are providing the level of training and oversight necessary for new employees.

Recommendation 2c: The Department should develop a standardized training calendar for its employees, ensuring that all employees are scheduled for training and certifications required by Department policy. The Department should consider developing an ongoing continuing education schedule for all employees to maintain certifications, achieve additional certifications (especially those required for advancement), and continue developing technical and soft skills related to code compliance and enforcement.

Recommendation 2d: The Department should begin paying upfront for employee's training and certifications, rather than requiring employees to request retroactive reimbursement. In instances where employees require multiple sittings of exams to achieve certification, the Department could consider a policy of funding the first sitting, but require employees to partially or completely fund subsequent sittings.

Observation 3: The promotional process for Code Compliance Officers is inconsistent with other County departments with field personnel and is not clearly defined through the Department's Employee Manual, standalone policies, or job descriptions. Department staff asserted inconsistent treatment of candidates for promotion, with certification requirements allegedly waived for certain employees and promotion available to employees who have not regularly exhibited high levels of production. Due to the limited number of Senior Code Compliance Officer positions available, a perception of inconsistent promotional process and lack of communication about available promotional opportunities has resulted in lowered employee morale.

Recommendation 3a: The Department should develop, publish, and codify in the Employee Manual a standardized policy for promotion of field personnel. The policy should clearly identify the years of service and certifications required for eligibility to promote, as well as methods for communicating the availability of promotional opportunities to all eligible staff, and the Department should adhere to the policy consistently for each promotional opportunity.

Recommendation 3b: The Department should consider working with the HR Department to add a Master Code Compliance Officer classification to account for increases in responsibility and certification required of longer tenured Senior Code Compliance Officers. The Department should further consider working with the HR Department to eliminate the restriction on the number of Senior Code Compliance Officer positions available and implement a system of promotional opportunities for individual employees, rather than an application-based system. The Department could consider a promotional pathway similar to the Police, Fire Rescue, or Animal Enforcement Services Departments in which a Code Compliance Officer who has been in their position for 24 months and has achieved a designated certification (such as Level II certification from the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement), has the opportunity to promote to Senior Code Compliance Officer, and receive an increase in salary grade. In this system, Senior Code Compliance Officers who have been in their position for 24 months and achieve the designated certification (such as Level III certification from the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement), would have the opportunity to promote to Master Code Compliance Officer, with the parallel increase in salary grade. In addition to time in position and certifications achieved, the Department could require performance evaluations as part of the promotional criteria.

Observation 4: The Department appears to inconsistently apply policies regarding overtime and comp time from team to team and from shift type to shift type (e.g., regular shift, late night shift, Saturday shift). The Code Compliance Officer job description does not provide an indication to applicants that overtime or non-standard shifts may be required.

Recommendation 4a: The Department should review the overtime policy currently codified in its Employee Manual to determine if the policy comprehensively covers the various scenarios for employees who are required to work outside of their normal shifts. The Department should update the overtime policy as necessary and ensure that it is consistently applied to all employees.

Recommendation 4b: The Department should work with the HR Department to include information about the non-standard shifts available and/or required for employees in all relevant job descriptions, including the Code Compliance Officer job description, posted on the County's employment website.

Observation 5: The Administrative Assistant job description and pay structure do not contemplate an increase in responsibilities for more senior Administrative Assistants, or the provision of training by more senior Administrative Assistants for newly hired staff. Additionally, the job description and pay structure do not contemplate the possibility of certification or advanced training that is or may be required for the job, including dispatcher training and certification.

Recommendation 5: The Department should consider working with the HR Department to add a Senior Administrative Assistant classification (or similar more advanced classification) and/or Lead Administrative Assistant classification (or similar lead classification) to account for increases in responsibility and possibility of certification required of longer tenured Administrative Assistants. The Department should further consider working with the HR Department to ensure the Administrative Assistant classification is adequate for the duties and responsibilities required of the Administrative Support Team.

Observation 6: The Department does not appear to maintain a holistic technology strategy that considers the integration of current and prospective technology, software, hardware, and other equipment, which has resulted in the Department purchasing equipment that do not allow for integration of tools and resources.

Recommendation 6: The Department should develop a comprehensive technology and equipment purchase strategy that holistically reviews existing technology, software, hardware, and other equipment with prospective purchases to ensure current and prospective resources will integrate and improve, rather than eliminate, efficiencies.

Observation 7: Enforcement of the County's codes and ordinances through DeKalb County Magistrate Court summons is one of the Department's most frequently used resources. Management of court appearances and tracking of court-related data and outcomes is performed partially by the Administrative Support Team and partially by a field operations Supervisor. The extensive duties, responsibilities, and time required for management of the Department's court activities restricts employees' abilities to invest time and attention to other responsibilities.

Recommendation 7: The Department should consider establishing a position dedicated to managing code compliance and enforcement activities at the DeKalb County Magistrate Court. The Department could also consider realigning duties and responsibilities of current positions to reassign management of court activities to an existent position without limiting the position's ability to invest time and attention to other responsibilities.

Observation 8: The Department attempts to encourage compliance with the County's property maintenance and zoning codes and ordinances through fines levied by the DeKalb County Magistrate Court on property owners identified as not addressing code violations. However, the County's fine schedule does not appear to offer a strong enough incentive for many businesses (especially property management, short-term rental companies, and real estate co-living management companies) to address violations. Repeat offender fines similarly do not incentivize property owners to address violations.

Recommendation 8: The County should consider reviewing the current fine schedule for property maintenance and zoning violations, including repeat violations, to ensure the level of fines assessed is in line with neighboring jurisdictions and provides property owners with adequate incentivization to address code violations.

Observation 9: Department staff asserted that cases presented to the DeKalb County Magistrate Court are frequently dismissed based on claims made by property owners. Between 2021 and 2024, the number of cases dismissed increased from 75 to 1,225 – an increase of 1,500%, compared to an 140% increase in number of cases initiated over the same time period. The Department doesn't control court decisions, but has to field complaints from the public when violations are not addressed due to cases being dismissed.

Recommendation 9: The Department should consider hosting regular meetings with County solicitors and the staff of the DeKalb County Magistrate Court to provide education on the importance of code enforcement and the recourses other than case dismissal available to property owners who have, or claim to have, limited means of addressing code violations.

Observation 10: The Department's Employee Manual is intended to serve as the Code Compliance Administration's standard operating procedures, but has not been comprehensively updated since November 2019. The document presents numerous contradictions and outdated information, including the name of the Department, as well as references to resources previously available through the DeKalb County Police Department. Sections and chapters have been rearranged or removed, without changed being reflected in the table of contents – including the removal of the chapter establishing standard operating procedures for field operations. Recent policies have been appended to end of the Employee Manual in memorandum form, but any chapters or sections amended through new policies are not consistently updated.

Recommendation 10a: The Department should conduct a comprehensive review and subsequent update of its Employee Manual. The updates should largely remove references to the Police Department, except in the instances Code Compliance Administration still utilizes Police Department resources. The Code Compliance Administration Employee Manual should be able to stand as an independent set of policies and procedures specific to the Department, and should refer to the Department by a singular name.

Recommendation 10b: The Department should reincorporate the chapter on field operations into the Code Compliance Administration Employee Manual. The chapter should include standard operating procedures for conducting field operations. The Department could consider including in the chapter information on required certifications, promotional processes, and explanations of personal protective equipment available to Code Compliance Officers.

Recommendation 10c: The Department should be sure to not just append new and updated policies to the end of the Code Compliance Administration Employee Manual in memorandum form, but also make the necessary changes to the chapters and sections within the body of the Employee Manual affected by the policy memoranda.

Observation 11: Neither the Department's Employee Manual nor its non-codified policies and procedures contemplate quality assurance/quality control reviews of work performed by employees, including inspection reports compiled by field personnel.

Recommendation 11: The Department should consider implementing a quality assurance/quality control review process as part of its regular operations, either through realignment of duties and responsibilities for current positions or through the establishment of a new quality-dedicated position. The quality assurance/quality control function would most likely report to the Code Compliance Administrator based on the Department's current alignment of responsibilities.

Observation 12: The Department has the ability to collect and report a large variety of input, output, and outcome data to help with performance management and the implementation of data-driven decisions. Department leadership do not currently appear to use the data collected as part of the decision-making process and have not updated annual objectives based on prior years' achievement or non-achievement of the standards set by those objectives.

Recommendation 12: The Department should consider reviewing its identified performance measures to ensure each is meaningful and relevant for the decision-making process. The Department should begin to emphasize data-driven decisions in order to operate more strategically, efficiently, and effectively. The Department should review its annual objectives against each prior year's progress toward successful completion of the objectives, and adjust the objectives, as well as the performance standards contained within each objective, to appropriately measure the Department's ability to achieve performance priorities and strategic initiatives.

Observation 13: During fieldwork, M&J staff noted divisions between the field operations teams due to unfamiliarity with the workloads and responsibilities of other teams. A lack of communication from Department leadership and the lack of insight into other teams' operations has resulted in a degree of resentment and inconsistent perceptions of work ethic.

Recommendation 13: The Department should consider a 360-degree-style training program for new Code Compliance Officer, in which each new field personnel serve for a period on a Residential Team, the Multi-family Team, and the Commercial Corridors Team. While M&J does not recommend rotations for experienced Officers, as specialization in single-family residential, multi-family residential, or commercial code enforcement provides a higher benefit to the Department, a brief rotation program for new Officers can provide insight into the operations and expectations of each field operations team.

Observation 14: The Department's communications infrastructure involves limited communication from Department leadership – especially in-person communication. The Deputy Director does not interact with most employees on a regular or meaningful basis, which has resulted in staff concerns of favoritism in the Department. Code Compliance Administration employee have limited insight into the overall operations of the Department and the decision-making process. The Department does not conduct Roll Call at the beginning of shifts and does not have regularly occurring meetings in which leadership communicate to Code Compliance Officers and/or Administrative Assistants.

Recommendation 14a: Department leadership should make more of an effort to engage with staff across all levels and functional areas, ensuring more intentional engagement across all teams. Communication should include both formal Departmental announcements and meetings, as well as informal discussions between coworkers and non-work-oriented team building. Leadership could consider developing workgroups representing staff on each team to provide insight and cross-team discussion for Departmental planning and performance efforts, as well as discussing policy modifications.

Recommendation 14b: The Department should introduce a daily Roll Call for each of the team to allow supervisory positions (as well as any experienced Officers designated as Officers in Charge or Field Training Officers) to review prior activities; expected and anticipated activities; performance management; and changes to policies, processes, and resources. The Deputy Director, Code Compliance Administrator, and any future Departmental leadership positions should try to attend multiple Roll Calls per week, as available, rotating between the teams in order to provide visibility, accountability, and consistent understanding of Department decisions.

Observation 15: Communication between the Code Compliance Administration and other DeKalb County departments is minimal, resulting in perceptions of non-participation in processes by other departments and perceptions of inconsistent practices by other departments that result in challenges for the conduct of Code Compliance Officers' daily activities. While the Code Compliance Administration policy on training conference attendance states that the Department will engage other County organizations in annual training, this promise has not been consistently implemented.

Recommendation 15: County leadership should encourage meetings among leadership from the Code Compliance Administration and other DeKalb County Departments on at least an annual basis in order to communicate changes in policy and process and ensure departments remain aligned in terms of provision of services. Departments considered for regular meetings should include Police, Fire Rescue, Public Health, E-911 Emergency Communications Center, Animal Enforcement Services, Planning & Sustainability, and Sanitation. In addition to leadership meetings, the County should encourage inter-departmental training for the aforementioned departments on an annual basis, to allow for interaction, networking, and alignment of understanding among down-line employees of the various departments.

Conclusion

The DeKalb County Code Compliance Administration is a public safety function that is not treated as a public safety function, which limits employees' ability to encourage and enforce compliance with the County's property maintenance and zoning codes, as well as places the safety of the Department's field personnel at risk. A lack of strategic, data-driven decision-making, and limited communication and transparency within the Department has resulted in lowered employee morale and heightened turnover in field personnel. Through a coupling of the Department's customer service focus with an investment in equipment, standard operating procedures, and enforcement of codes and ordinances, the Department can make an even larger impact on addressing code violations and blight within unincorporated DeKalb County. M&J would like to thank Department leadership, as well as the 24 individuals across all levels of the Department, for allowing us to conduct numerous interviews, group interviews, and job shadowing,

3.D E911 Emergency Communications Center

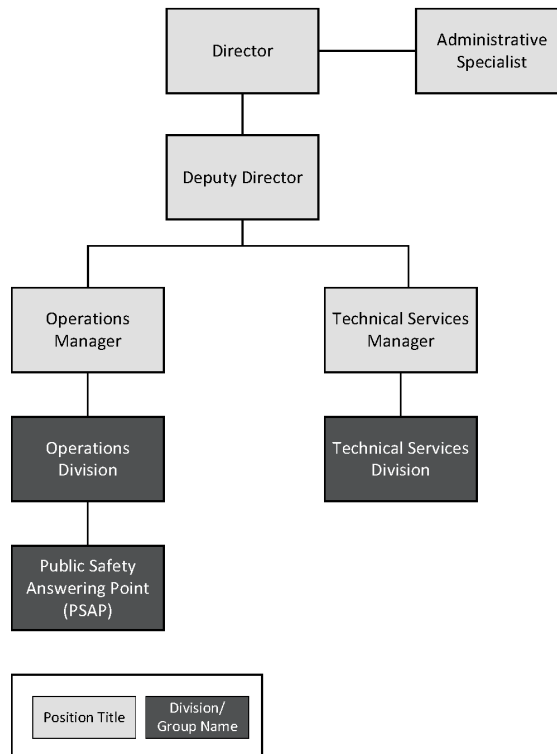
Introduction

The E911 Communications Department (“E911”) operates 24/7 as the Public Safety Answering Point (“PSAP”) for unincorporated DeKalb County and provides some level of answering and/or dispatch services for most of the County’s municipalities. E911 staff serve as the first point of contact for most DeKalb County residents, businesses, and visitors seeking public safety services through both emergency (“911”) and non-emergency service calls. E911 provides emergency medical dispatch (“EMD”), emergency fire dispatch (“EFD”), and emergency police dispatch (“EPD”) services as well as after-hours phone coverage for DeKalb County Animal Enforcement Services. E911 responds to a total of over 1,000,000 service calls per year, including both 911 and non-emergency calls. E911 staff also perform a variety of tasks to maintain the performance of the PSAP’s operations and support the County’s overall public safety radio communications infrastructure. Staff work to support PSAP operations through recruitment, training, quality assurance (“QA”), and public records administration.

Organization

E911 is managed by the E911 Director (“Director”), who reports to the Public Safety Director. The Director is supported by the Deputy Director and assisted by an Administrative Specialist, although the Administrative Specialist position was vacant during the evaluation period and therefore was not included in M&J’s evaluation. The E911 Director is responsible for overseeing general Departmental operations and, in coordination with the rest of the Department’s leadership team, guiding Department strategy. The Deputy Director supports the Director’s roles, including serving as the direct supervisor of the Operations Manager and Technical Services Manager and by receiving and evaluating public feedback submitted to the Department. The Director and Deputy Director both represent E911 to the public by serving as the Department’s primary media contacts and by attending community events and meetings.

The E911 Communications Department is divided into two Divisions: the Operation Division and the Technical Services Division. The following organizational chart shows E911’s organization. The organization had adequate spans of control and generally conforms with standard E911 organizational structures.



Operations Division

The Operations Division is led by the Operations Manager, who is responsible for generally overseeing PSAP operations, reviewing staffing assignments to ensure proper functioning, and addressing challenges that may occur throughout the day. The Operations Division is divided into two functional areas: the PSAP Operations functional area and the PSAP Support functional area.

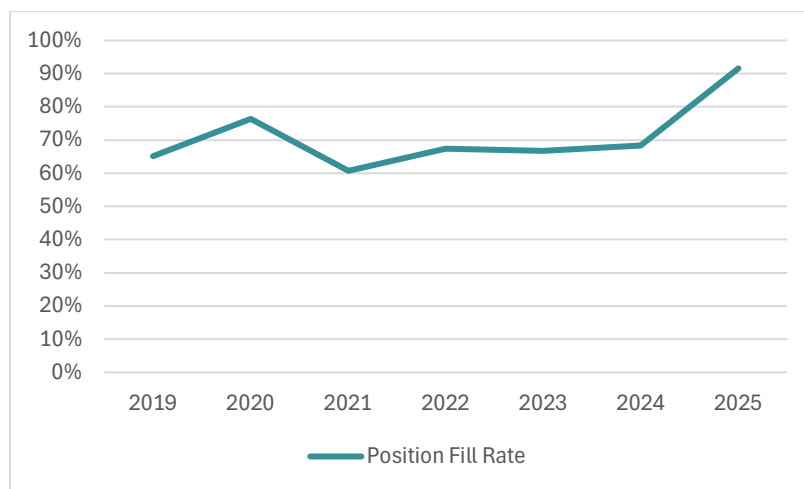
PSAP Operations

The PSAP Operations functional area is responsible for providing the PSAP’s calltaking and dispatch functions. Calltaking involves receiving emergency or non-emergency calls for service and speaking with the caller to ascertain the information needed to dispatch services in response to their specific request for service. Dispatching involves reviewing the information captured by the calltaker to identify appropriate units to respond to the call, transmitting relevant information to the field units responding to the call, and updating field units as additional information comes in related to the call.

Operations Division staff are divided into four shifts. The PSAP’s four shifts work 12-hour schedules, with two shifts designated as “day shifts” (6:00 AM to 6:00 PM) and two shifts designated as “night shifts” (6:00 PM to 6:00 AM). Scheduling operates on a two-week cycle composed of one “short week” consisting of two workdays and five off days and “long weeks” consisting of five workdays and two off days, for a total of 84 hours worked every two weeks. Commonly in E911 departments, the period of the day with the highest call volume typically runs from late morning through mid-evening (typically roughly 9:00 AM through 9:00 PM). The Department has considered modifying the staffing model to add a “peak load shift” to provide additional calltaking and dispatch capacity during these higher demand periods.

Each shift is led by one of E911's four Watch Commanders. The Watch Commanders are responsible for managing operations during their shift, including managing personnel and adjusting staff assignments in response to last-minute availability changes. Each shift's Watch Commander is supported by four of E911's 16 Shift Supervisors, who are responsible for more directly monitoring staff performance, facilitating communications between different parts of the PSAP, and providing staff with support as needed. Calltaking and dispatch functions are carried out by E911's 95 Communications Officers. The Communications Officer positions are divided into the Communications Officer I, Communications Officer II, and Communications Officer III levels. All Communications Officers are trained to function as calltakers. Staff at the Communications Officer II level are also qualified to provide EPD dispatch services, while staff at the Communications Officer III level are qualified to provide all dispatching services (EPD, EFD, and EMD).

In the past few years, E911 experienced high levels of attrition among Communications Officers and had persistently high vacancy rates, as shown in the graph below. Over the past year, E911 has prioritized hiring to fill its vacant Communications Officer positions and has successfully filled over 90% of its budgeted Communications Officer positions. Due to the recent high levels of recruitment, though, the number of Communications Officers at Level I (63) strongly outweighs the number of Communications Officers at Level II (12) and Level III (12). As a result of the current relative shortage of Communications Officer IIs and Communications Officer IIIs, staff working in PSAP Operations report occasional challenges in filling all dispatcher positions during a given shift without relying on Supervisors "working down" to fill dispatcher positions or the use of overtime staff. E911 uses overtime work to fill calltaker and dispatch positions, with the current offering of triple overtime serving as a strong incentive for PSAP Operations staff to fill the shifts. E911 does not make use of mandatory overtime.



Communications Officers have a straightforward path for advancement and growth, with the ability to move from Communications Officer I to Communications Officer II to Communications Officer III upon completing the requisite training and certification. Upon reaching the Communications Officer III position, staff can advance to fill vacancies in the Shift Supervisor position when they open. Shift Supervisors have opportunities to grow either through promotion to the Watch Commander position or through lateral moves to the Supervisor positions within the PSAP Support functional area.

PSAP Support

The PSAP Support functional area contains a variety of functions that support operations of the PSAP, including recruiting, training, QA, and open records management. The Management Analyst is responsible for a variety of tasks related to recruiting and hiring, including receiving and reviewing applications, arranging for background checks of applicants, and administering applicant tests. The Training Supervisor is responsible for providing classroom-based calltaker training to newly hired Communications Officers, overseeing the “hands on” portion of calltaker and dispatcher training, tracking continuing education progress for all E911 staff, and updating training and reference materials as required. The QA Supervisor administers the QA processes required for obtaining and maintaining E911’s International Academies of Emergency Dispatch (“IAED”) Accredited Center of Excellence (“ACE”) status and works with QA staff in the DeKalb Police Department and DeKalb Fire Rescue Department to review staff performance. The two Open Records Supervisors process open records requests received from other government entities and members of the public in accordance with Georgia’s open records requirements.

The PSAP Support functional area offers limited opportunities for growth or promotion without moving into the PSAP Operations functional area. The various PSAP support positions each only have a single level (*i.e.*, there are not multiple levels of Open Records Supervisor, such as I/II/III or Junior/Senior), which means that PSAP Support staff can only be promoted into the Watch Commander position, if eligible, which requires moving back into the PSAP Operations functional area. The growth paths available to PSAP Support staff do not involve further developing skills, certifications, and competencies related to PSAP Support functions.

Technical Services Division

The Technical Services Division is led by the Technical Services Manager, who is responsible for managing the technical staff that maintain the systems used in the PSAP and the County’s public safety radio communications network. Technical Services Division is divided into two functional areas: the Radio Communications functional area and the Information Technology (“IT”) functional area.

Radio Communications

The Radio Communications functional area maintains DeKalb County’s public safety radio communications system. The Radio Systems Administrator leads the Radio Communications functional area, including managing E911’s relationship with its primary radio services vendor, Mobile Communications America (“MCA”), and overseeing the functional area’s two Radio Specialists. The Radio Systems Administrator and Radio Specialists regularly inspect the County’s 12 transmitter locations (including nine County-owned sites and three leased sites) to ensure that the facilities are in good repair. Radio Communications staff also issue, program, conduct preventative maintenance on, and repair the radio equipment issued to DeKalb County public safety agencies as well as create requisitions for E911 invoices. The Radio Systems Administrator and Radio Specialists maintain a rotating on-call schedule to respond in the event of an after-hours issue with the public safety radio communications system. All members of the Radio Communications functional area maintain Communications Technician and Communications Unit Leader certifications through the State of Georgia.

Due to the fact that the Radio Specialist position is a single-level position (*i.e.*, there are not multiple levels of Radio Specialist, such as I/II/III or Junior/Senior), the Radio Communications functional area offers limited opportunities for growth or promotion.

IT

The IT functional area maintains E911's computer and non-radio technology systems. The three Departmental IT Specialists maintain public safety computer workstations, including providing regular preventative maintenance and repairing issues when they arise. Two of the Departmental IT Specialists primarily focus on maintaining E911's computers, including the calltaking and dispatching stations in the PSAP, while the third Departmental IT Specialist primarily focuses on maintaining the laptops installed in the DeKalb County Police Department's squad cars. The two E911 computer-aided dispatch ("CAD") Analysts work alongside staff from a vendor, CentralSquare, to maintain E911's CAD system. One of the two Systems Administrators works primarily to administer E911's records management system ("RMS"), while the other Systems Administrator maintains the hardware and configuration of the servers that host E911's CAD and RMS systems. IT's staff maintain an on-call rotation to respond in the event of after-hours issues with E911's technology systems.

Each of the three position titles within the IT functional area focus on a different area of technical skills. The three IT positions all are assigned different pay bands, with the Systems Administrator position having the highest pay band of the three, the E911 CAD Analyst position having the next highest, and the Departmental IT Specialist position having the lowest. Due to the fact that all three position titles are single-level positions (*i.e.*, there are not multiple levels of Departmental IT Specialist, such as I/II/III or Junior/Senior), the organizational structure of the IT functional area provided limited to no promotion opportunities, depending on which position the employee currently holds.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

E911 currently has two primary strategic priorities:

- Communications Officer Vacancies
- IAED ACE Certification – EFD and EPD

Communications Officer Vacancies

As shown in the previous graph, E911 has had high Communications Officer vacancy rates since at least 2019. The Department's consistent vacancy concerns have impacted PSAP performance and helped create a stressful environment that has a negative impact on staff morale. In early 2024, Department leadership began a focused hiring effort to fill the Department's vacancies. This hiring effort includes expanding the Department's hiring and training classes from their typical size of slightly fewer than a dozen recruits up to nearly 20 recruits. As discussed earlier in this report, this hiring effort successfully reduced the Department's Communications Officer vacancy rate to under 10%, although the employment has not yet addressed specific shortages of highly trained/experienced staff at the Communications Officer II and Communications Officer III levels. To this point, the Department's efforts related to reducing its Communications Officer vacancy rate have largely focused on hiring new communications officers, not retaining existing Communications Officers.

IAED ACE Certification – EFD and EPD

IAED ACE is a designation that recognizes a PSAP as a high-performing agency that has verified compliance with a set of industry standards and has implemented a set of recognized industry best practices. IAED awards ACE designations to specific calltaking and dispatch disciplines within a PSAP, including EMD, EFD, and EPD, not to the PSAP as a whole. Organizations receive several benefits for achieving and maintaining an ACE designation, including guarantees from IAED regarding liability and litigation support. The Department has maintained ACE status for EMD operations for at least nine years. Approximately five years ago, E911 began the process of seeking ACE accreditation for EFD operations and the Department achieved a necessary performance milestone at the end of 2024 and recently submitted its final application for ACE EFD designation. E911 began the process to receive the ACE designation for EPD operations in 2024.

In order to receive IAED ACE status, one of E911's CAD vendors, Priority Dispatch, requires its customers to train their calltakers to use Priority Dispatch's calltaking scripts and implement a rigorous QA methodology to ensure that calltakers operate in compliance with the calltaking scripts. The QA methodology required by Priority Dispatch involves conducting daily reviews of a sample of calls from the prior day, grading the sample calls on their compliance with the established calltaking scripts, and applying training or corrective actions as needed to address persistent issues in calltaker compliance with the established standards.

Operations Division Key Duties and Responsibilities

PSAP Operations

The PSAP Operations functional area has three primary functions:

- Calltaking
- Dispatching
- Dispatcher Training

Calltaking

Calltaking is the process of answering calls for service, screening the calls to determine the type of service needed, obtaining all information needed to dispatch services as appropriate, and inputting the information into the CAD system. The PSAP receives a mix of call types and the CAD system serves calls to calltakers based on priority, with 911 calls receiving the highest priority and non-emergency and administrative calls receiving lower priority. Upon receiving a call and assessing the basic need, the calltaker follows the script established by Priority Dispatch to obtain and enter all necessary information. The CAD system uses the information input by the calltaker to automatically direct the script through the appropriate lines of questioning for the call type. Once enough information has been received from the caller to identify the location and service need, the CAD system alerts the appropriate dispatcher to begin the dispatch process. For certain types of calls, including many medical emergency calls, the script may instruct the calltaker to stay on the line with the caller until emergency services arrive.

Dispatching

Dispatching is the process of taking the information gathered by calltakers and using it to direct services as appropriate to respond to the variety of incidents received by the PSAP. Dispatchers use the County's public safety radio system to communicate with police, fire, and emergency medical services ("EMS") units. E911 maintains eight distinct dispatcher positions, including four dedicated EPD positions and four dedicated EFD/EMD positions.

Dispatchers utilize the CAD system to receive information from calltakers, update logs to document incident response, and track the status of assigned field units. As needed, dispatchers will communicate with calltakers and/or perform "call backs" to obtain additional information needed or requested by the field units

Dispatcher Training

Specialized training is required to advance from the Communications Officer I position, which qualifies the employee to serve as a calltaker, to the Communications Officer II position, which qualifies the employee to perform EPD operations. Additional training is required to move from the Communications Officer II position to the Communications Officer III position, which qualifies the employee to perform EFD and EMD operations. Training for EPD, EFD, and EMD operations does not currently include any dedicated classroom training, although the Training Supervisor does maintain manuals detailing the EPD and EFD/EMD processes.

Dispatcher training is primarily conducted by other Communications Officers that are experienced in the dispatch discipline being trained and have obtained their Communications Training Officer ("CTO") certification. Dispatch trainees are assigned a CTO to work with throughout the training process. Trainees begin by observing their assigned CTO perform the dispatch functions being trained. Once the trainee has been sufficiently exposed to the dispatch process, they take over for their assigned CTO and begin carrying out dispatch functions under the CTO's supervision and guidance. CTOs prepare daily observation reports ("DOR") detailing the performance and progress of their assigned dispatch trainee. The Training Supervisor, Watch Commander, and Shift Supervisors review the DORs and meet with the CTOs at least once every other week to discuss their assigned trainee's progress and determine if they are ready to be released to the floor as a solo dispatcher.

PSAP Support

The PSAP Support functional area has three primary functions:

- Calltaker Recruiting and Training
- QA
- Open Records Processing

Calltaker Recruiting and Training

Staff within the PSAP Support functional area oversee the recruiting, onboarding, and training of new calltakers. Staff are recruited in classes, with new classes of recruits typically entering training every few months. Each class begins their training with several weeks of classroom training on the basics of calltaking and dispatching for EMD, EFD, and EPD, using a curriculum developed and delivered by the Training Supervisor and certified under the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (“APCO”) P33 Training Program, a leading industry training program certification. The in-classroom curriculum is supplemented by the E911 Calltaker Procedure Manual, a document developed and maintained by the Training Officer that details all aspects of the calltaking process. New recruits also receive their basic Georgia Crime Information Center (“GCIC”) and Peace Officer Standards & Training Council (“POST”) certifications during the classroom training section. At the conclusion of the classroom portion, recruits are paired with an experienced Communications Officer that holds their CTO certification who will guide the recruit through the “hands on” portion of the training.

The Training Supervisor manages the CTOs as they train their assigned recruits on calltaking processes. The “hands on” portion of the training process lasts as long as needed for the recruit to become an effective and reliable calltaker, which can be as short as a month or as long as five or six months. CTOs prepare DORs each day detailing the performance and progress of their assigned recruit. The Training Supervisor, Watch Commander, and Shift Supervisors review the DORs and meet with each CTO at least once every other week to discuss their recruit’s progress and determine if the recruit is ready to be released to the floor as a solo calltaker.

While typical recruit classes consist of fewer than a dozen students, E911 has brought in a series of larger-than-normal classes of recruits within the past year as part of E911’s effort to fully staff its Communications Officer positions. Prior to these large classes, CTOs were typically assigned to serve as “hands on” trainers for one recruit out of every other class, the larger class sizes during the past year has required CTOs to serve as “hands on” trainers for recruits from back-to-back classes, increasing their workload. CTOs do not currently receive any stipend or benefits for possessing the CTO certification or for taking on the additional responsibility of serving as a “hands on” trainer.

QA

The PSAP Support functional area’s QA Supervisor manages the execution of E911’s QA methodology in accordance with IAED’s standard for ACE designation, including conducting call grading through Priority Dispatch’s QA system. When a call is graded as non-compliant, the QA Supervisor works with the calltaker to identify and correct the reason for the non-compliance. If the QA Supervisor identifies a trend where certain issues continue reoccurring across multiple calltakers, they may address the concern in a PSAP-wide manner, either through reinforcement at the daily roll call meeting or through emails to all PSAP Operations staff. The QA Supervisor does not utilize the formal discipline system as part of the QA process, instead working as a “coach” for the calltakers.

The QA Supervisor also reviews all calls during which E911 instructed the caller to perform CPR, although these reviews are not part of the formal QA methodology required by Priority Dispatch. The QA Supervisor receives a list of CPR-related calls from the prior day from EMS and reviews each relevant call in order to evaluate the calltaker’s CPR instruction performance.

The QA Supervisor also serves as the Department's primary point of contact with QA staff in the County Police Department and Fire Rescue Department in the event that there are questions regarding the PSAP's calltaking and dispatch performance.

Open Records Processing

The PSAP Support functional area's Open Records Supervisors maintain the Department's records and respond to open records requests in accordance with the requirements in the Georgia Open Records Act. The Open Records Supervisors receive open records requests via either a dedicated, shared email address or traditional mail. E911 does not have access to GovQA, a specialized public records management platform, utilized by several other County agencies. Instead, the Open Records Supervisors use Quickbase, a cloud-based workflow management platform, to track the status of open records requests. Quickbase automates a portion of the open records response process, but does not provide a number of useful features, such as an online request submission portal, digital/online payment collections, and digital file delivery, that are offered by GovQA.

The Open Records Supervisors review submitted requests to determine whether fees are due for the request and use Quickbase to prepare invoices as necessary. E911 sends invoices and receives all payment, in the form of check or money order, via mail. For requests for which fees are charged, Open Records Supervisors do not prepare the requested materials until after payment has been received. The Open Records Supervisors log received payments in Quickbase before delivering the checks to Police Department financial staff for processing and deposit. Once any payments have been settled, the Open Records Supervisors prepare the requested records by redacting protected information from the records as necessary and preparing the Compact Discs and printouts that E911 uses to deliver audio and text records, respectively, to requestors. The Open Records Supervisors retain copies of the provided documents, uploading them to Quickbase. E911 delivers requested documents via mail.

Technical Services Division

Radio Communications

The Radio Communications functional area has two primary functions:

- Radio System Maintenance
- Radio Equipment Configuration and Maintenance

Radio System Maintenance

Radio Communications works with MCA to maintain the operations of the County's public safety radio system. The County maintains 12 transmitter sites for the public safety radio system, including a mix of leased and owned sites. One of the County's owned transmitter sites serves as the "Prime Site" for the radio system, through which all radio transmissions are routed. The County does not currently have a designated backup Prime Site, which means that any failure at the Prime Site will result in a complete blackout of the public safety radio system until the Prime Site can be brought back online. Radio Communications has previously requested funding to convert an existing transmitter site into a backup Prime Site location, which would allow the overall radio system to remain functional in the event of an outage at the Prime Site.

As part of its maintenance of the public safety radio system, Radio Communications staff utilize a template to conduct monthly on-site inspections of all 12 transmitter locations. If Radio Communications staff identify concerns with the radio equipment or site conditions during their on-site inspection, they work with MCA and/or the Facilities Department to address the equipment or site concerns. In the event that the operation of the County's public safety radio system is disrupted, Radio Communications employees (or the on-call employee, if the outage happens outside of normal working hours) will respond to the impacted transmitter location and work with MCA and/or the Facilities Department to diagnose the cause of the outage and perform repairs needed to restore radio service.

Radio Equipment Configuration and Maintenance

Radio Communications works with MCA to configure and maintain the radio equipment used by staff throughout the County's public safety agencies. Radio Communications staff develop and maintain radio programming templates for County public safety agencies and utilizes the templates to program the radios to function as needed for each agency. Staff also utilize diagnostic equipment to evaluate the health of radio equipment, identify equipment in need of repair, and serve as the first line of support for malfunctioning radio equipment. MCA performs more involved repairs or maintenance of radio systems.

The County's primary contract with MCA entitles the County to preventive maintenance on Police Department radio equipment once per year. Staff within the Radio Communications functional area track the radio systems issued to Police Department units and communicate with Police Department management to ensure that all Police Department radios take advantage of the annual maintenance benefit. Other public safety agencies maintain separate maintenance contracts with the radio services vendors and staff within those other agencies are responsible for ensuring that the agency's radios undergo preventive maintenance.

IT

The IT functional area has two primary functions:

- Helpdesk Support
- Systems Administration

Helpdesk Support

IT serves as the first line of helpdesk support for E911 computers, including support for E911-specific software as well as basic support for general hardware and software issues. For issues with PSAP computer systems, IT uses the DAPage system to receive support requests from Shift Supervisors in the PSAP. For issues with non-PSAP computer systems, IT directs E911 staff to submit helpdesk tickets through the County-wide Zoho helpdesk ticketing system. Zoho is configured to automatically route tickets from E911 users to the E911 IT functional area, although this configuration does not always work as intended. E911 IT also uses Zoho to escalate issues to the County Department of Innovation and Technology ("DOIT") as needed. IT has designated a small number of PSAP Operations staff as "power users" and empowered them to respond to very basic service requests, such as replacing broken mice and keyboards, without creating tickets in Zoho or involving IT.

In addition to maintaining E911 computer systems, the E911 IT has taken on the maintenance of the laptops installed within Police Department vehicles. Helpdesk tickets submitted to Zoho related to Police Department vehicle laptops are automatically routed to designated IT staff. The Police Department's Advanced Technical Unit configures certain Police Department-specific software on the Police Department's in-vehicle laptops and installs and maintains other in-vehicle technology systems, including in-vehicle Wi-Fi networks.

IT maintains an on-site inventory of a small number of items that require regular replacement, such as mice and keyboards, but does not maintain a stock of many other parts and equipment. In the event that IT needs to replace a part or piece of equipment that is not held in their inventory, IT is required to go through the standard procurement process to purchase the part before the repair can be completed, delaying the repair process. E911 typically has enough spare equipment, both in and outside of the PSAP, that procurement-based delays to equipment repair typically do not directly impact E911's ability to fulfill its core obligations, but the delays do disrupt operations by requiring staff to use backup or alternate equipment.

Systems Administration

The IT functional area administers and maintains several software platforms used by E911, including the RMS and CAD systems that the Department hosts on-premises. In coordination with DOIT and E911's software vendors, IT staff maintain and configure the servers that host the RMS and CAD systems, including both the primary servers located at the E911 Department's primary location and the backup servers located at a Department of Watershed Management's facility. E911 does not maintain a non-local secondary backup of its computer systems.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

The Training Supervisor maintains thorough training manuals that detail the calltaking and dispatch (including EPD and EFD/EMD) functions. The Training Supervisor regularly updates these manuals to align with changes to relevant APCO standards or Priority Dispatch systems. In the time that M&J spent observing PSAP operations, calltaking and dispatch operations generally operated in alignment with the relevant training manuals. E911 also has adopted several official policies outlining specific aspects of the calltaking and/or dispatch process (*e.g.*, customer service guidelines and protocols for responding to calls with callers for whom English is not their preferred language), PSAP-support functions (*e.g.*, the QA process), and general departmental policies (*e.g.*, continuing education and discipline). These official policies are generally not quite as detailed as the calltaking and dispatch manuals, but they have been updated recently.

E911 also has a Supervisors' Manual, which describes the various additional roles and responsibilities that staff take on upon promotion to Shift Supervisor. Alongside guidance and instruction from other employees in the role, the Supervisors' Manual serves as the primary training material for newly promoted Shift Supervisors. E911 does not regularly update the Supervisors' Manual, with the version currently in use dated 9/21/2020. The Supervisors' Manual includes a section that briefly describes the Department's open records processing function, but the version of the function described in the Supervisors' Manual is outdated and does not align with the function's current operations.

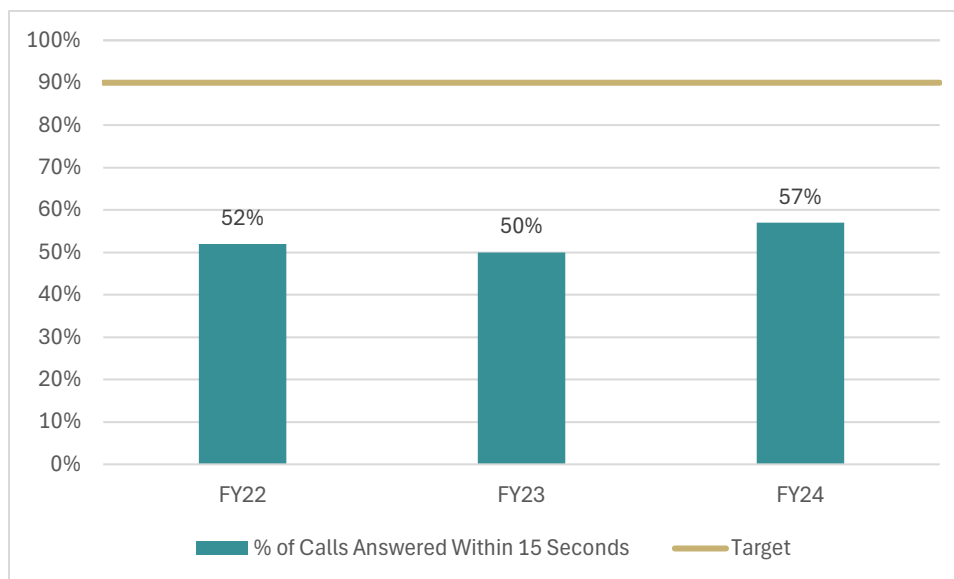
The calltaking, dispatch (including EPD and EMD/EFD functions), and supervisor manuals all contain date stamps, although the date stamps do not specify whether the given date is the original effective date of the document, the last revision date of the document, or the date that the document was last reviewed. E911's various policy documents list the original approval date as well as a dated log listing all revisions but do not provide information on the last date that the policies were reviewed. Tracking all three dates (effective date, last revised date, and last reviewed date) on guiding documents, like E911's manuals and policies, is a leading practice that enhances an organization's version control abilities and allows for more effective validation of whether the documents are up-to-date. The Technical Services Division does not maintain any written documentation, guides, or job aides.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

E911 currently tracks several performance measures, although it does not have a standardized process or location for reporting these data. These data include non-compliant performance scores for EMD, EFD, and EPD; call volume; and time-to-answer figures. The PSAP Support functional area does not regularly record or report on any performance metrics other than call compliance metrics prepared as part of the QA process, such as open records request volume or turnaround time. The Technical Services Division does not regularly record or report on any performance metrics, such as system reliability/uptime.

Call Wait Time

One key metric used by E911 departments to evaluate performance is the share of calls answered within 15 seconds, with the National Emergency Number Association ("NENA") setting a target of 90%. The graph below shows the Department's performance against this NENA benchmark.



As shown in the preceding graph, E911 has not achieved the industry standard target for call wait time performance. Much of E911's difficulty in meeting the NENA target can be attributed to significant vacancy levels in Fiscal Year 2022 ("FY22") and FY23, as discussed earlier in this report. Vacancy rates decreased significantly by the end of FY24, with E911 finishing the year with more than 90% of positions filled, but the gap between the Department's FY24 performance and the target can be explained by high vacancy rates that remained earlier in FY24 as well as the fact that many of the staff that E911 hired to bring down vacancy rates were in training or shortly out of training throughout much of the year and had not yet reached their full productivity.

The fact that E911 made some progress at reducing the gap between its wait time performance and the NENA target from FY23 to FY24 suggests that the Department's efforts to increase staffing are having a material positive effect on Department's time-to-answer performance. Data are not yet available to directly assess the impact that the improvement to E911's PSAP Operations staffing is having, but other measures suggest that E911 is still not close to reaching the NENA target. Looking only at 911 (*i.e.*, emergency) calls, the average time to answer calls in December 2024 was roughly 32 seconds. This figure is an improvement over E911's performance in January 2024 (53 seconds), it indicates that the improvement in staffing likely has not fully solved the Department's time-to-answer challenges. During observations of PSAP operations during a midday shift on a weekday in February 2025, M&J staff noted that call waiting times in excess of the 15 second standard were not uncommon, with times occasionally extending above one minute. Reworking PSAP Operations scheduling to better account for the Department's typical busy periods could help to reduce overall wait time measures but may not by itself be sufficient to bring the Department into compliance with the NENA standard.

One method that the Department uses to bring down wait times is the "Emergency Rule." During periods where call volume and wait times are elevated, Shift Supervisors can declare that the Emergency Rule is in effect. During Emergency Rule periods, calltakers are not allowed to take breaks and use of the standard Priority Dispatch calltaking scripts is suspended, with staff instead using a streamlined script that focuses only on collecting the minimum information needed to complete dispatch. Supervisors end the Emergency Rule declaration once they determine that call volumes and wait times have returned to manageable levels. Use of the Emergency Rule to reduce wait times in high-activity periods reduces wait time metrics below where they would be if the Department operated using their standard procedures at all times, making reported wait time figures (including the percentage of calls answered in under 15 seconds figure referenced in the NENA standard and average time to answer) reducing their reliability as measures of Department performance.

M&J requested various data to perform an analysis of E911's PSAP staffing levels using a rudimentary NENA PSAP staffing model (NENA-REF-001-2003) but, at the time of report compilation, has not received all information needed to complete the analysis. Other E911 staffing models, such as those included in APCO's Project RETAINS methodology, can also be used to evaluate the adequacy of PSAP staffing levels.

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

QA Compliance Scores

The QA Supervisor uses a Priority Dispatch-provided QA software suite to review the sample of calls and grade the calls for compliance with the established scripts. The software system automatically selects calls for review at random. At the moment, E911 is required to review at least seven EMD calls per day and at least three EFD calls per day. Due to the fact that the Department's EPD operations are much earlier in the ACE accreditation process, E911 is required to review a relatively higher volume of EPD calls, at least 30 per day. In order to handle this temporary increase in EPD call reviewing workload, E911 has contracted with a third party to conduct grading of a portion of the sampled EPD calls.

The Priority Dispatch-provided software used to conduct the required QA methodology uses a random process to select calls for review. As a result, certain calltakers may be overrepresented or underrepresented by chance in the calls selected for QA compliance review over a given period of time, which could result in compliance concerns going unaddressed. E911 is in the process of implementing a new software tool that uses artificial intelligence ("AI") to automatically conduct preliminary grading of all calls received by E911. The QA Supervisor can use these preliminary grades to identify areas of potential concern and select additional calls for review above and beyond those required to be reviewed by the Priority Dispatch-mandated QA methodology.

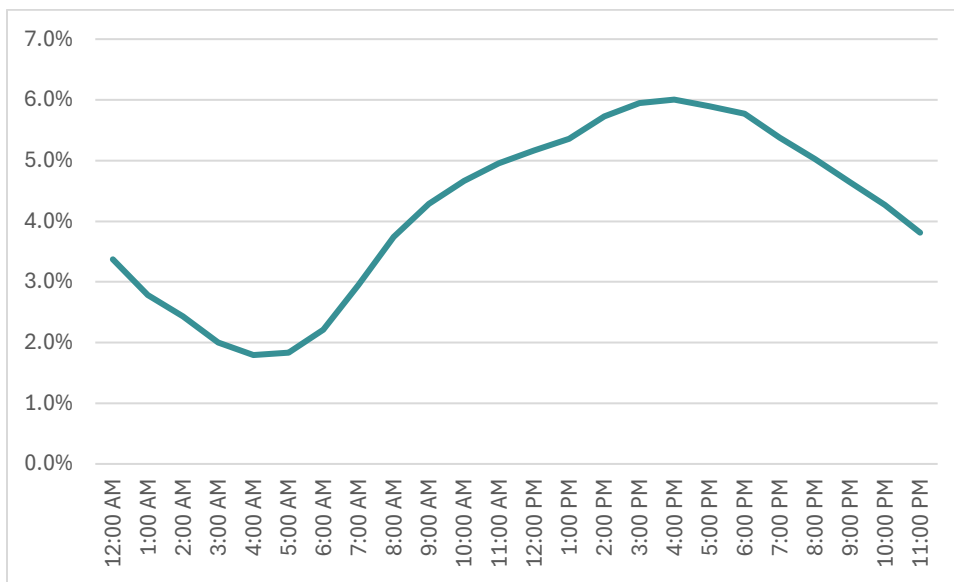
In order to obtain and maintain ACE status, IAED requires that PSAPs maintain non-compliant performance scores (*i.e.*, the proportion of calls graded as "non-compliant") of no greater than 7%, low compliance performance scores of no greater than 10%, and partial compliance performance scores of no greater than 10%. The graph below shows E911's aggregate annual non-compliant performance scores by discipline (*i.e.*, EMD, EFD, and EPD) from FY22 through FY24.



As shown in the above graph, E911 has met the IAED compliance benchmark for EFD for FY22 through FY24. E911 did not meet the compliance standard for EFD in FY22 or FY23, as is expected for PSAPs in the early-to-mid stages of the ACE application process, but did show progress from year to year and achieved the compliance standard in FY24. E911 began tracking compliance for EPD operations when they began the formal EPD ACE application process in FY24. As expected for programs early in the ACE application process, E911 did not meet the compliance standard for EPD in FY24.

Call Volume

The Department also tracks data related to the overall volume of calls received by the Department. The graph below shows the average distribution of calls by time of day from January 2024 through February 2025. E911's call volume typically peaks in the late afternoon (between 4:00 PM and 5:00 PM), while the E911's quietest period is typically in the late night/early morning (between 4:00 AM and 5:00 AM). The Department's daytime and early nighttime call volume (from roughly 9:00 AM through 9:00 PM) is generally higher than its nighttime and early morning call volume.



Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

E911's Director and Deputy Director both joined the Department relatively recently from outside agencies and are still in the process of integrating with the Department's pre-existing culture. E911 staff have mixed perceptions about how successful leadership's efforts to build relationships with Department staff have been so far. While the Director does maintain an "open door" policy, staff throughout all levels of E911 understand the Director to be a strong proponent of respecting chains of command and hierarchy within organizations. In organizations with a heavy emphasis on chain of command and organizational hierarchies, leaders need to play an active role in building engagement with lower-level staff in order to overcome the inherent hesitancy that staff may have about utilizing an "open door" policy to communicate in a way that bypasses the typical chain of command.

Communications

The Department generally communicates Department-wide announcements to staff through Department-wide emails. Messages for PSAP Operations staff, including policy changes or brief refresher trainings from the QA Supervisor, are typically delivered by each shift's Watch Commander in a short "stand-up" meeting that takes place at the start of each shift.

Interdepartmental Relationships

The Department's relationships with DeKalb Fire Rescue and the County's EMS partner are generally healthy and productive. The Department largely works well with the County Police Department, although there are some areas of difficulty in the relationship. One of these challenges relates to open records. E911's policy, developed in accordance with the Georgia Open Records Act, is that the Open Records Supervisors are the only staff permitted to release call/radio recordings and printouts of CAD records. Despite repeated reminders of this policy, Police Department staff try to request these records from sources in E911 without going through the standard open records request process, or in violation of the prohibition for requesting records associated with open investigations.

The other notable area of difficulty in E911's relationship with the Police Department relates to the recent implementation of Priority Dispatch's call scripts for EPD calls. The adoption of the scripts significantly increased the structure of EPD calltaking. Calltakers now have much less freedom to collect police-related call information based on what they are hearing from the caller, and instead must follow the scripts as written. Police Department staff have not fully adjusted to this change and have expressed concerns to E911 about the fact that calltakers may not collect certain information not included in the scripts that Police Department staff became accustomed to receiving under the old calltaking methodology.

Morale and Staff Wellbeing

Morale within the Department's operational staff is generally low and has been for some time. Some staff state optimism about the new department leadership, but this is often counterbalanced with pervasive concerns that have not yet been resolved. One of the major drivers of the Department's morale shortfall is a persistent feeling of being overworked, largely the result of the Department's high vacancy rates up until this past year's hiring push. Low morale contributed to high levels of turnover, which in turn led to high vacancy rates, creating a vicious cycle. It remains to be seen whether the Department's recent hiring push will result in a lasting improvement to vacancy rates and morale.

Operational staff pay is another major contributor to the Department's generally low morale. Many operational staff feel as if their compensation is not commensurate to the level of training that they undergo and the level of stress that their job subjects them to. Many organizations consider E911 as relatively commensurate with other public service positions in the organizations, such as firefighters, EMTs, and police officers, noting that E911 operational staff are required to maintain similar certifications to and are subjected to similar levels of mental stress (although not physical danger) as these first responders but have not consistently received commensurate pay raises throughout the recent past.

A number of E911 operational staff note that they rely on triple overtime pay to make ends meet. These staff reported that the announced ending of triple overtime pay may make it so that employment with E911 is no longer a viable career path and force them to look for employment elsewhere. Staff also noted that uncertainty surrounding the end of triple overtime, including questions about when triple overtime will end and whether other programs will be announced to replace the program, has added to their stress.

Some staff, including both operational staff and some mid-level management, reported a perception that operational staff in the Department were not provided with adequate resources to maintain their mental health, given the occasionally traumatic nature of E911's work. While all PSAP staff appeared to be aware of at least some of the mental health resources made available to E911 operational staff, some staff reported that the provided resources were not sufficient and/or that they did not feel comfortable using the resources. Concerns related to ability to use the resources include worries that staff will be seen as taking advantage of the resources to get out of work and retaliated against. Other DeKalb County public safety agencies, including the DeKalb County Police Department and DeKalb County Fire Rescue Department, provide several mental health resources beyond those offered by E911, including an in-house Licensed Professional Counselor and a peer support program.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

The Department has obtained IAED ACE status for EMD and has nearly completed the process to receive ACE status for EFD. The Department is still in the early stages of obtaining ACE status for EPD.

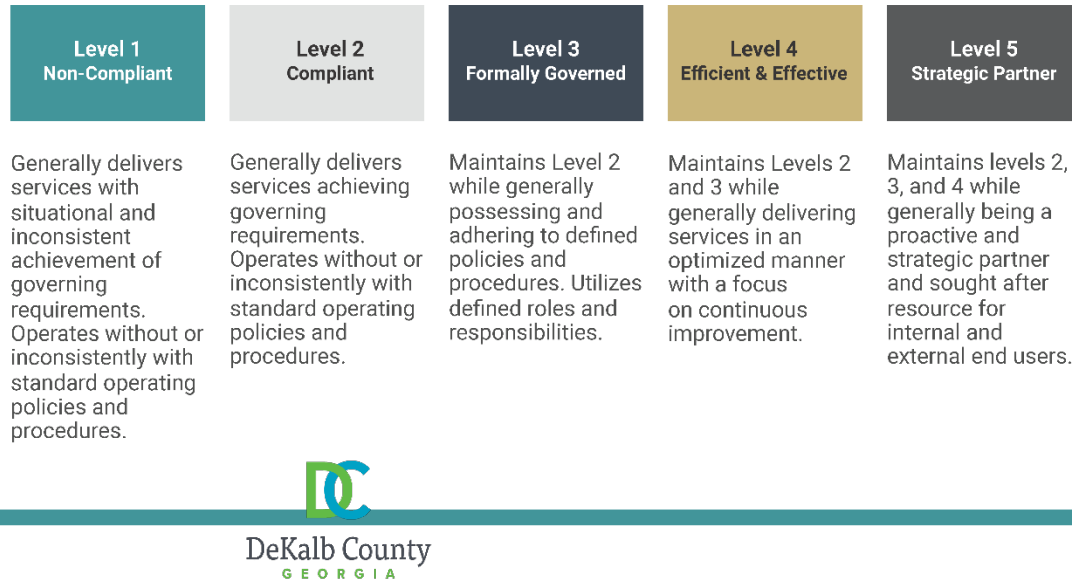
Prior to E911's recent staffing push, the Department was in the process of receiving Public Safety Communications Accreditation status through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies ("CALEA") but stepped back from this effort in order to focus on hiring and training staff to fill the Department's high number of vacant positions.

The Department's internal PSAP Operations training programs are certified through APCO's P33 Training Program Certification program.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.

Maturity Model



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 2: Compliant.

E911 generally operates in alignment with most governing requirements, although it may not regularly meet certain industry performance targets. Some E911 functions, particularly those functions like calltaking and dispatch that are governed by detailed industry standards, are documented in detailed, relatively up-to-date standard operating policies and procedures, but such documentation does not exist or is not regularly updated for a number of other functions, including all Technical Services Division functions and open records processing. The absence of formal, updated processes and procedures for certain key functions means that the Department is reliant on institutional knowledge, which means that the departure of key staff poses a significant risk to the continued operations of certain Departmental functions.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: PSAP Operations shifts run from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, and vice versa. The Department's peak call load typically lasts between mid-morning (around 9:00 AM) and mid-evening (around 9:00 PM). As a result, the Department's current shifts are relatively underutilized during the portions of the shift outside of the Department's peak time (6:00 AM to 9:00 AM and 9:00 PM to 6:00 AM) and are relatively overtaxed during the portions of the shift within the Department's peak time (9:00 AM to 6:00 PM and 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM).

Recommendation 1: E911 should consider implementing an additional 12-hour “peak load” PSAP shift in addition to the two shifts that currently make up the Department’s daily schedule. The “peak load” shift would provide additional staff to ensure that the PSAP is equipped to handle the higher volume of calls that come in during the Department’s busiest hours. Adopting a “peak load” shift would allow the Department to allocate staff more efficiently by reallocating some amount of staff from the Department’s “base” shifts (*i.e.*, 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, and vice versa) to the peak period.

Observation 2: E911 does not currently offer a salary stipend or other benefits to staff that take on additional responsibilities above and beyond the standard duties of their position, such as Technical Services staff working as on-call technical support or PSAP staff serving as a CTO, or for obtaining relevant certifications above and beyond the minimum required for their position. Without providing such a stipend, Departmental staff are not incentivized to perform these valuable tasks or obtain additional relevant skills and knowledge.

Recommendation 2: E911 should work with HR to assess the viability of adopting salary stipends or other benefits for staff that take on additional responsibilities above and beyond the standard duties of their position, such as working on-call or serving as a CTO, or for obtaining relevant certifications above and beyond the minimum required for their position.

Observation 3: E911 current open records request processes are highly manual and analog. The Department does not have an automated process for receiving open records requests and instead relies on physical mail or emails to a shared email inbox. The Department does not accept electronic payments and instead only accepts physical checks or money orders as payment for open records fees. The Department does not perform initial records distribution via digital means and instead distributes records in physical media (printouts and CDs). These manual operations increase the workload for the Department’s Open Records Supervisors and expose the Department to the myriad risks that come with handling physical payments. E911 does not have access to the GovQA public records management platform, which several other County agencies use to administer their own public records processes. GovQA offers a number of functionalities that the Department does not currently have access to, including an online request submission portal, digital/online payment collections, and digital file delivery.

Recommendation 3: E911 should identify the County department that serves as the owner of the County’s GovQA contract and work with DOIT and the identified department to gain access to GovQA for managing its open records processing process, including receiving open records request submissions, tracking open records processing workflows, creating invoices and receiving payment, and providing responsive files to requestors.

Observation 4: E911 does not currently maintain a backup location for the “Prime Site” of the County’s public safety radio system. The “Prime Site” houses equipment integral to operations of the system as a whole and, as a result, any disruptions to the operation of the Prime Site result in disruptions to the entirety of the County’s public safety radio network. Radio Communications has previously requested funding to convert an existing transmitter site into a backup Prime Site location.

Recommendation 4: The County should consider funding the installation and maintenance of a “Prime Site” public safety radio system backup at the location identified by Radio Communications.

Observation 5: E911 IT maintains an inventory of spare parts and equipment only for a very limited number of items that it has identified as needing replacement frequently, such as mice and keyboards. In the event that IT needs to replace a part or piece of equipment for which a spare is not available in the IT's limited inventory, IT goes through a standard purchasing process to obtain the replacement part or equipment, which may take several days to complete. While the Department maintains enough backup workstations that operations are generally not seriously disrupted during this period, the delay between identifying the problem and obtaining the replacement part or equipment does inconvenience Department staff and may reduce overall operational effectiveness.

Recommendation 5: IT should develop a process for reviewing its tickets and service records to identify additional parts that IT frequently replaces. IT should then start carrying an inventory of the identified parts, including parts used in maintenance and "consumables," such as cables.

Observation 6: While the Police Department's Advanced Technical Unit is responsible for maintaining other specialized technology installed in Police Department vehicles and the software installed on the Police Department's in-vehicle laptops, staff in E911 IT are responsible for hardware and basic software support for the Police Department's 600+ in-vehicle laptops. Maintaining the Police Department's in-vehicle laptops consumes IT staff and resources, for which the Police Department does not reimburse E911.

Recommendation 6: E911 should work with the Police Department to clearly establish the E911 and Police Department responsibilities for maintaining the Police Department's in-vehicle laptops, including each department's respective responsibilities regarding purchasing and resource usage. Based on these determinations, E911 may need to reevaluate staffing level adequacy for supporting this additional workload.

Observation 7a: E911 maintains thorough, regularly updated written documentation detailing the PSAP Operations Section's calltaking and dispatch functions. The County also has recently adopted policies that outline the structure of the Department's QA function and provide additional details related to calltaking and dispatch. The Department Supervisors' Manual, which details a variety of processes related to supervising and supporting PSAP operations, is significantly out-of-date, though, and the included section discussing the Department's open records procedures does not reflect current practice. The Department does not maintain any regularly updated documentation detailing the key services of the Technology Services Division. The absence of useful documentation for a significant share of the Department's key functions means that the Department is highly reliant on institutional knowledge and creates the risk that the departure of a relatively small number of key staff could significantly impair Department operations.

Observation 7b: E911's policy, procedure, and process documents generally contain at least one date stamp, but these stamps are often unlabeled, preventing readers from determining whether the given date is the document's original effective date, last revised date, or last reviewed date. While many of the date stamps on E911's documentation evidence that the documents have been revised recently, some other E911 documentation, such as the Supervisors' Manual, have unlabeled dates suggesting that the documents may not been reviewed or updated for several years.

Recommendation 7a: E911 should begin creating and/or updating documentation for additional Department key functions in addition to the ones for which it currently maintains effective documentation (calltaking, dispatching, and QA functions, primarily). This new and/or updated documentation should contain a sufficient level of detail that personnel with general subject matter knowledge but without knowledge of the Department's specific practices will be able to understand the broad strokes of how the Department operates. New documentation should cover topics including (but not limited to) open records management, additional detail related to the QA process, and all major Technical Services Division processes. Updates include continued updating of the Department's calltaking and dispatch documents.

Recommendation 7b: E911 should implement practices, such as quarterly or annual reviews, that will help to ensure that all Department documentation and policies are updated to reflect current practices. E911 management should also consider updating its policy, procedure, and process documents to better track these review practices by listing and clearly identifying the original effective date, last revised date, and last reviewed date for each document.

Observation 8a: E911 tracks certain data related to PSAP operations and performance, including QA compliance scores for EMD, EFD, and EPD; call volume; call abandonment rates; and time-to-answer figures. The Department does not have a standardized method of presenting these data, however, which limits the usefulness of the data in Departmental and County-wide decision-making structures. Consolidating performance data into a single repository that provides leadership, both within E911 and the County, with ready access to relevant information.

Observation 8b: The PSAP Support Section does not regularly record or report any performance metrics other than call compliance metrics prepared as part of the QA process, while the Technical Services Division does not regularly record or report any performance metrics. The lack of performance data related to significant portions of the PSAP Support Section and the entirety of the Technical Services Division limits the ability of Department and County leadership to meaningfully evaluate the performance of these organizational units in an objective manner.

Recommendation 8: E911 should reevaluate its data collection and management practices to both ensure that it is collecting all relevant data and that it is presenting collected data in a manner that supports the effective use of data in decision-making processes. The Department should review the data that it collects to ensure that collected data are meaningful, relevant, timely, and comprehensive. Potential new measurements to collect include system reliability/uptime for both the Radio Communications and the IT Sections and volume of requests and request turnaround time as they relate to the Department's open records function.

Observation 9: E911 has not succeeded at meeting NENA's target of answering 90% of calls within 15 seconds for at least the past three years, largely due to the Department's significant staffing shortages. The Department has filled nearly all of its vacancies, but some in the Department are still concerned that the Department's budgeted staff levels are not sufficient to meet the demands placed by the Department's high call volumes. Anecdotal observations by M&J staff support the conclusion that the Department's current staffing levels may not be sufficient to meet the NENA call wait time target.

Recommendation 9: E911 should continue to closely monitor its performance against the NENA <15 second wait time standard. If the Department does not approach the target levels despite being nearly fully staffed with fully-trained PSAP staff, the Department should consider utilizing the APCO Project RETAINS methodology or another similar PSAP staffing evaluation methodology to assess the adequacy of the Department's current budgeted staffing levels. If the methodology indicates that the Department's budgeted staffing levels will not support performance in line with industry standards, the County should consider increasing the Department's staffing budget to better align with the staffing levels indicated by the staffing methodology.

Observation 10: E911 offers a number of mental health resources to PSAP operations staff to help cope with the mental and emotional demands of their positions, including a County-sponsored private counselor program, access to a chaplain, and use of a private meditation/destressing room in the E911 office. Some Department operations staff report that the provided resources are not sufficient and/or that they fear that they will be retaliated against due to leadership seeing use of the resources as a way to get out of work. Other DeKalb County public safety agencies, including the DeKalb County Police Department and DeKalb County Fire Rescue Department, provide several mental health resources beyond those offered by E911, including an in-house Licensed Professional Counselor and a peer support program.

Recommendation 10: E911 should work with PSAP operations staff to review the adequacy of its current mental and emotional wellbeing resources. In particular, the Department should review the mental health resources offered by the County's other public safety agencies and determine whether it can provide at least an equivalent level of services, potentially through partnering with other County agencies. The Department should work with Human Resources and proactively engage with employees to ensure that they are aware of the range of mental health resources at their disposal. Finally, the Department should consider adopting and widely promoting policies laying out explicit guidelines governing how employees can utilize the mental and emotional wellbeing resources provided to them and providing protections to employees that seek out the resources in the approved manner.

Observation 11a: E911's current communication methods are largely reliant on hierarchical communications where Department leadership communicate through mid-level managers instead of communicating with all staff directly. The Department has made an effort to create more open communications and build stronger relationships between lower-level staff and E911 leadership through tools like the Director's "open door" policy, but staff see these efforts as largely having been unsuccessful in building an open, familiar relationship.

Observation 11b: Many E911 staff state that the triple overtime pay currently offered by the Department is an integral part of their household finances and that the announced ending of triple overtime is creating significant levels of stress and uncertainty in their lives. Staff have not yet been provided a number of details related to the end of triple overtime, including when triple overtime will end and what (if anything) will replace the practice.

Recommendation 11a: E911 leadership should reevaluate their methods of communicating with lower-level staff in order to more effectively develop a rapport and support a healthy relationship. One method that the Department may employ in efforts to build stronger relationships with staff would be the creation of an employee council or similar representative body to advocate for and represent the interests of the Department's non-managerial staff. The employee council will provide Department staff a vehicle to bring thoughts, complaints, feedback, and suggestions to leadership in a manner that likely holds more credibility in the Department's chain of command-focused organizational structure than an "open door" policy.

Recommendation 11b: E911 leadership should develop processes and communications for introducing and responding to policy changes (both within E911 and County-wide) that may have a significant impact on staff lives and livelihoods, such as the upcoming end of triple OT. Leadership should make a point to provide as much detail to employees as is reasonably possible regarding the timing of, as well as the replacement mechanism for, these significant policy changes in order to minimize uncertainty and stress, which can detract from employee performance.

Conclusion

E911 is an integral component of the County's public safety function, serving as a first response to callers, and ensuring timely and informed dispatch of public safety resources. E911 has had a period of staffing challenges, which is starting to improve. The focus needed to improve these staffing challenges, however, has resulted in a focus on calltaking and dispatch, with other functions getting less attention, resulting in discrepancies in documentation.

The Department should continue to ensure calltakers and dispatchers are trained and ready to serve DeKalb County, including a focus on mental health and wellbeing.

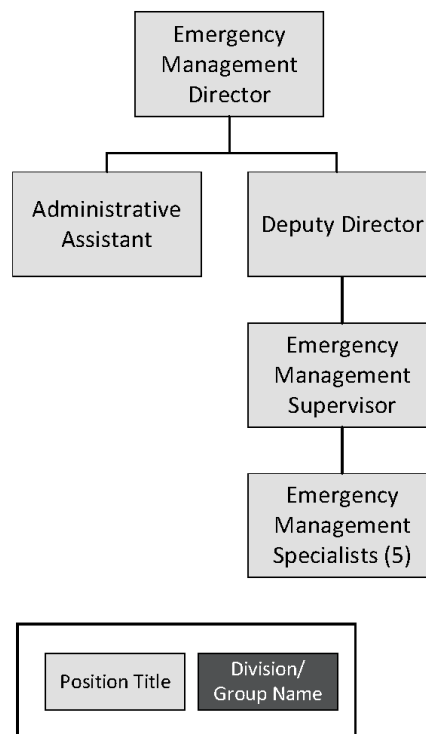
Current Department efforts, partnered with the recommendations contained in this report, will allow E911 to continue to advance as an effective asset for the County. We would like to thank Department leadership for their time and resources, and for allowing us to speak with more than 20 individuals through interviews, job shadowing the calltaking and dispatching functions, and a facility tour.

3.E Emergency Management

Introduction

DeKalb Emergency Management Agency (“DEMA” or “Department”) is responsible for coordinating and overseeing the County’s emergency response for a variety of emergency events and situations. DEMA liaises with County departments, municipal sources, the private and nonprofit sector, the State of Georgia, and other public sector resources to coordinate response and recovery in the event of an emergency situation. DEMA is also responsible for developing and implementing disaster preparation, planning, education, and mitigation efforts for the County.

Organization



The Department is led by an Emergency Management Director, who, pursuant with the Official Code of the State of Georgia, must be approved by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (“GEMA”) and must be a Certified Emergency Manager. The Emergency Manager Director is supported by a Deputy Director. The Deputy Director position was repurposed in 2024 to serve solely as the Emergency Management Deputy Director, having previously been split with other public safety agencies. The Deputy Director oversees an Emergency Management Supervisor, who supervises five Emergency Management Specialist positions. Currently, four of these five positions are filled.

The Emergency Management Specialist position offers no opportunities for growth or promotion, other than into the Emergency Management Supervisor position. There is limited incentive for continuing education in emergency management leading practices, other than required continuation education and renewal of certifications.

The Department also maintains an administrative assistant who supports the needs of the Emergency Management Director. The role of the Administrative Assistant varies from provided classification specification, to what the Emergency Management Director noted as the duties and responsibilities, and what the Administrative Assistant described as the roles of the job. The Emergency Management Director identifies the Administrative Assistant as responsible solely to him and for his needs and administrative support. The provided classification suggests that the role is designed to provide broader support to the department and its managerial staff. Due to significant turnover and vacancies in the Emergency Management Specialist position in recent year, the Administrative Assistant has also assumed duties that have historically been the responsibility of the Emergency Management Specialists, such as attending community outreach and education events on behalf of the Department.

Staffing Analysis

The Department has had significant turnover from January 2017 to March 2025 in the Emergency Management Specialist position. The position has been held by 11 individuals in the last 3 years (since January 2022), 7 of whom have since left the Department. For January 2017 through January 2024, the length of the average tenure for the Emergency Management Specialist position was 471 days, or 1.29 years.

The Department maintains five budgeted Emergency Management Specialist positions, four of which are currently occupied. The average headcount since 2017 is between an estimated three and four employees. There have been periods of significant departure; within a two-month period in 2021, three Emergency Management Specialists left. In 2023, three Emergency Management Specialists left over a four-month period.

Between January 2017 and March 2025, the Department has had two brief periods with all five positions occupied: January to February of 2022 and October to December of 2023. Since 2017, the Department has had three periods where only one position was occupied: January 2017 to July 2018, August to December 2021, and July to August 2023.

Volunteer Organizations

DEMA also utilizes support and resources made available through a variety of volunteer organizations. Many of these organizations are established under, and governed by, federal regulations.

Within DeKalb, DEMA has created the Emergency Management Response Team (“EMRT”) as the umbrella organization that all other volunteer groups are under.

EMRT team members receive Community Emergency Response Team (“CERT”) training, in addition to “stop the bleed” training and a driver’s training course offered by DeKalb’s Risk Management section within the Finance Department. Nationally, CERT is administered by the Department of Homeland Security. CERT training can include courses in fire suppression, search and rescue, mass casualty response, and disaster first aid. CERT members may provide assistance until the arrival of law enforcement or emergency services personnel, or may supplement the services and resources provided by County personnel during emergency response situations. EMRT members undergo background checks as part of their application process.

A sub-division of the EMRT is the Amateur Radio Emergency Services (“ARES”), which is part of the American Radio Relay League. ARES offers licensed, trained, amateur radio operators to support communication efforts during emergencies and disaster events. These radio operations are on separate radio channels, and are governed by Memorandums of Understanding (“MOUs”) with HHS, the National Weather Service, and the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials, as well as the American Red Cross and Salvation Army.

Currently, DEMA does not have any MOUs or agreements with ARES to establish the framework for utilization of ARES personnel and equipment.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) typically organizes emergency management functions into five mission areas, which often serve as the strategic underpinnings for emergency management agencies to organize and prioritize their services and programs:

- Prevention: Actions taken to prevent hazards from occurring
- Mitigation: Efforts to reduce the impacts of disasters and emergencies
- Preparedness: The cycle of planning, organizing, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective actions
- Response: Actions taken in response to an incident
- Recovery: Actions taken to restore operations after a disaster

DeKalb County has adopted the Incident Command System (“ICS”) and the National Response Framework for preparing for and responding to incidents. The National Response Framework includes the use of Emergency Support Functions (“ESFs”) that describe and organize coordinating structure that group resources and capabilities into functional areas that are most frequently needed during emergency response.

Because DEMA is performing activities associated with all five mission areas, it creates the perception that it is operating strategically. Unfortunately, based on the activity and information M&J has reviewed, DEMA is doing little more than the federally and state required activities associated with each activity, and is not effectively strategically building out capacity, networks, resources, and funding. Within DEMA, there are ideas for some additional activities, resources, and initiatives, but these ideas do not appear to be part of a broader strategic plan or vision.

Prevention

Strategically, prevention efforts and priorities focus on identifying vulnerabilities and other risks that could create or exacerbate emergency conditions or increase the risk or likelihood of emergency incidents.

Public outreach and education is a traditional activity within the prevention phase. DEMA participates in a number of community outreach events, including many hosted by the DeKalb Police and DeKalb Fire Rescue Departments. These events are also opportunities to recruit volunteers. DEMA also utilizes social media for outreach, education, and general awareness.

DEMA provides CERT training and “stop the bleed” training to EMRT volunteers, and coordinates with the Finance Department’s Risk Management section for a driver’s training course. DEMA is also working to create more localized municipal and neighborhood teams, to allow for more targeted deployment during smaller-scale or more localized emergency events. DEMA is also working to cross-train more of the EMRT for specialized deployment in logistics and resource support, staffing the point of distribution, traffic management, and providing clerical and administrative support during emergencies.

Traditionally, emergency management agencies are also expected to coordinate the training in the ICS framework for individuals who may serve as the ESF subject matter expert. DEMA staff are certified to provide CERT training, but currently no one on staff is a certified ICS trainer, which may hinder the County’s ability to quickly train new executive leadership, as well as individuals who may serve in ESF roles during an activated EOC.

Certain types of plans are also considered prevention plans. DEMA is required to develop and update a Hazard Mitigation Plan (“HMP”) every five years that identifies potential hazards, assesses the County’s vulnerability to hazards, and develops strategies to reduce impact. DeKalb’s HMP was last updated in late 2023.

Mitigation

DEMA is expected to engage and participate in identification of potential mitigation practices, although they may be executed by other DeKalb County agencies, such as Planning and Sustainability for building codes that may assist in the prevention of disaster conditions, or the purchase of floodplain tracts throughout the County to avoid development in areas prone to flooding.

DEMA also assists in the acquisition, and storage of resources for deployment during an emergency event. DEMA has spreadsheets to track its current resources and materials, which are stored in various facilities throughout the County. DEMA may also use third parties, such as the Red Cross, for access to durable equipment, such as cots for using in warming and cooling centers. DEMA reportedly does not maintain a core supply of consumable materials, other than those acquired for response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Protection

DEMA is required to monitor certain types of activities and the presence of certain types of risks within the County, such as the Safe Dams program through the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, and floodplain acquisitions made by Public Works. DEMA is required to monitor the high-volume presence of chemical and other hazardous materials at businesses within the County. Under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (“EPCRA”), facilities who qualify as Tier II (generally defined as a facility that stores or handles more than 10,000 pounds of hazardous chemicals annually, or stores or handles 500 pounds of an Extremely Hazardous Substance) must report the average volume and specific location of hazardous and toxic substances housed at the facility at any given time. As part of the EPCRA requirements, each facility within DeKalb County must report annually and submit this information to DEMA. DEMA utilizes EPlan, an online database that provides access to Tier II reports and other relevant emergency response information to assist in responding to incidents at those facilities.

The Georgia Safe Schools Act requires public schools to develop a school safety plan that addresses natural disasters, violence, and terrorism. These plans are submitted to DEMA and are reviewed by an Emergency Management Specialist. The Department is evaluating means for encouraging private schools to develop and submit plans.

The County has one weather monitoring station at the EOC to cover the 271 miles within DeKalb County. Currently DEMA leverages the ARES network for additional weather monitoring and reporting.

DeKalb County utilizes CodeRED to provide updates to the public on emergencies or other risk situations. CodeRED is also used for internal coordination and communication. CodeRED allows individuals to sign up to receive notifications. CodeRED is also integrated with FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning ("IPAWS") system, which allows notifications to reach unsubscribed residents and travelers throughout the County during an emergency event. CodeRED is also connected to the National Weather Service ("NWS") for push notifications on severe weather events.

DeKalb County does not currently maintain a customized list within CodeRED of vulnerable populations, or others who may need additional support or notification during emergency events, such as unhoused residents, or house-bound elderly residents. Leading practice is for EMAs to have an ability to directly contact these populations, and in certain disaster response types, provide them with a means to request additional support or assistance.

Preparedness

Emergency management agencies are required (in Georgia by both GEMA and FEMA requirements) to develop a number of plans. In addition to the HMP noted in a previous section, emergency management agencies must also develop a Local Emergency Operations Plan ("LEOP") that describes the management and coordination of resources and personnel during periods of major emergency. As part of the LEOP, EMAs also develop other plans, such as continuity of operations plans. DeKalb's LEOP was last updated in 2024.

GEMA requires local EMAs to complete an annual training and exercise planning workshop, and complete two training exercises each year, with at least one live exercise, or documentation of the activities associated with responding to a declared disaster. Industry leading practice encourages EMAs to develop multi-year plans for the tabletop exercises and the live exercises, to ensure that the Emergency Operations Center and engaged individuals (including County and municipal personnel, and County executive leadership), have tested the County's proposed response plans for a variety of disaster types. DEMA may also participate in exercises hosted by other organizations, such as Georgia Power and a regional healthcare coalition.

As part of DEMA-led exercises, DEMA completes after action reports ("AARs") which document and assess the effectiveness of the response, and any improvement plans or additional actions that DEMA should assist in implementing or coordinating. A review of the AARs for exercises conducted in the last three years indicates that DEMA has not conducted a mass shooting or mass casualty exercise, which is industry practice as a regular incident type. Additional evaluation of the AAR results is found in the Recovery sub-section.

Response

The Emergency Management Director is responsible for coordinating with the Public Safety Director to make recommendations to the County's Chief Operating Officer ("COO") for declaring a local state of emergency. One of the primary response efforts is assessing the need for an Emergency Operations Center ("EOC") and establishing an EOC, if warranted. The EOC is a physical space that serves as the hub for the coordinated response effort and is governed by ICS standards for operations. Responsibilities include collection and dissemination of information, identifying resource needs and obtaining and distributing resources, coordinating future response needs and activities, and may also include discussion and decisions around broader public communications and policy decisions. The EMA Director must assess the emergency situation and determine which ESFs and other groups should be present in the EOC. EOC oversight may also include deploying CERT and/or ARES members, as appropriate, to assist in the response efforts.

The County's EOC is located in the Public Safety Headquarters in Tucker. The EOC has a number of the FEMA recommendations for EOC space, including multiple workspaces, backup power source, access to running water, and redundant communications. The backup EOC is at the Watershed Plant in Dunwoody. Both of these locations (Public Safety Headquarters in part due to its purpose, but also its physical location near a railroad) may be at-risk for targeted attacks, which may pose a risk for EOC operations. Leading practice includes the development of a stand-alone EOC, which can also serve as a resources and logistics storage and distribution location.

EOC operations are governed by the ESF roles. ESFs are grouping of government, and some private sector skills and sources into a single organizational structure. This structure is utilized to provide systematic resource, support, and response implementation in the event of a disaster. Georgia has traditionally recognized 16 ESFs, with 15 implemented within most local emergency management agencies. Georgia has recently started recognizing a 17th ESF – cybersecurity, although it has not yet provided guidance or expectation for local EMA utilization.

DEMA's physical set-up lacks significant dedicated, centralized storage space, plus also lacks covered storage for specialty vehicles and equipment, which can increase wear and tear and may result in unnecessary damage to equipment and vehicles.

Recovery

As the recovery phase of emergency response and disaster recovery may be prolonged, many governments assign responsibility for data collection and cost reimbursement tracking to a centralized government function. Within DeKalb, the Finance Department supports collection and submission of documentation related to recoupment of eligible costs associated with disaster response. DEMA assists by liaising with responding organizations, and providing copies of FEMA forms and other documentation to assist with information collection and capture of time dedicated to disaster response.

For events as well as exercises, industry practice is to complete After-Action Reports, some with the inclusion of implementation plans (“AARs” or “AAR-IPs”). AARs are designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the exercise or response, and identify opportunities for improvement moving forward. AARs typically follow a standard structure, and include a performance rating for each of the exercise objectives, as well as an evaluation of the strengths and areas of improvement for each exercise objective. M&J reviewed seven AARs completed within the last three years. Two of the AARs were for general support to on-site public safety personnel, such as at the Peachtree-DeKalb airshow, or during a 9/11 memorial climb at Stone Mountain. These are not truly emergency response or disaster response events, but more opportunities to provide additional support and education outreach.

All of the exercises were designed to test response protocols and the ICS framework associated with natural disaster response; while several of the exercises aligned to the hazards identified in the EOP as high planning significance, not all of the high significance event types were included; additionally, there were no exercises associated with man-made emergencies or terrorism threats, such as mass shootings, or hazardous material spills, fires, or other spread. While these man-made emergencies tend to be assessed as low significance (defined as less broad-scale community impact), there is also a public trust component that should be considered when identifying and scheduling exercises.

The AAR-IPs identified a number of opportunities for improvement for exercises and actual responses; this is not uncommon for AAR-IPs. However, all of the stated periods for action were listed at one year from the date of the exercise and/or the recommended action start date. The Emergency Manager also noted that departmental tracking of the progress of the recommended actions was continual evaluation, but only tracked anecdotally, without a written record for tracking implementation.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

DEMA maintains plans such as the HMP and LEOP in compliance with GEMA requirements. It has developed a number of response and mitigation plans. What DEMA currently lacks, however, is standard operating procedures or other detailed guidance that instruct the DEMA team, along with partners who may be deployed during an emergency response, on how to operationalize against those plans, and in response to disasters. Currently, internal practices are reliant on DEMA employees’ institutional knowledge, which can be hindered by the lack of tenure in DeKalb County, and for some employees the lack of background in emergency management.

Not all ESF-designated individuals have received ICS training, which also results in a lack of core understanding of the EOC operating protocol, and their role and responsibility in emergency response and EOC activation. Several of the AAR-IPs noted the lack of understanding of roles and communication as a weakness, which could easily be mitigated through additional training and standardization of expectations. This lack of training may make it more difficult to review and apply the protocols established in the LEOP without additional training, drills, and guidance.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

Benchmarking emergency management responsibilities can be challenging, as there are not only geographical and population differences between DeKalb and other same sized peers, but there are also differences in strategy, priority, motivation, and municipal makeup. Generally, DeKalb's responsibilities are comparable to emergency management functions within the metro Atlanta area and the Southeast. At a minimum, most EMAs are tracking number of trainings hosted and number of individuals trained, as well as the number of incidents/exercises completed annually, measured against both a baseline goal as well as prior performance. Currently, DEMA reports data on multiple years of outreach events and EMRT meetings and trainings.

For the FY25 budget process, DEMA updated some of the performance measures associated with its objectives. The newly introduced performance measures, such as number of outreach events by designated area, engagement rates on activities, compliance and effectiveness, are likely more effective performance measures than previous measures. As FY24 was the first year some of these measures were captured, additional benchmark data may be necessary to refine KPI and KPM goals for the department.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

DEMA leverages a standard public safety chain of command, with a certified, Governor-approved Emergency Manager leading the Department and responding to a Director of Public Safety whose role is to coordinate and ensure consistent response across the County's public safety departments, as appropriate.

Buy-in and engagement with external partners (Red Cross, the municipalities, etc.) are an integral part of emergency management response. DEMA hosts annual meetings with each of the cities, participates in community outreach and education events hosted by the Police and Fire & Rescue Departments, as well as other community-hosted events.

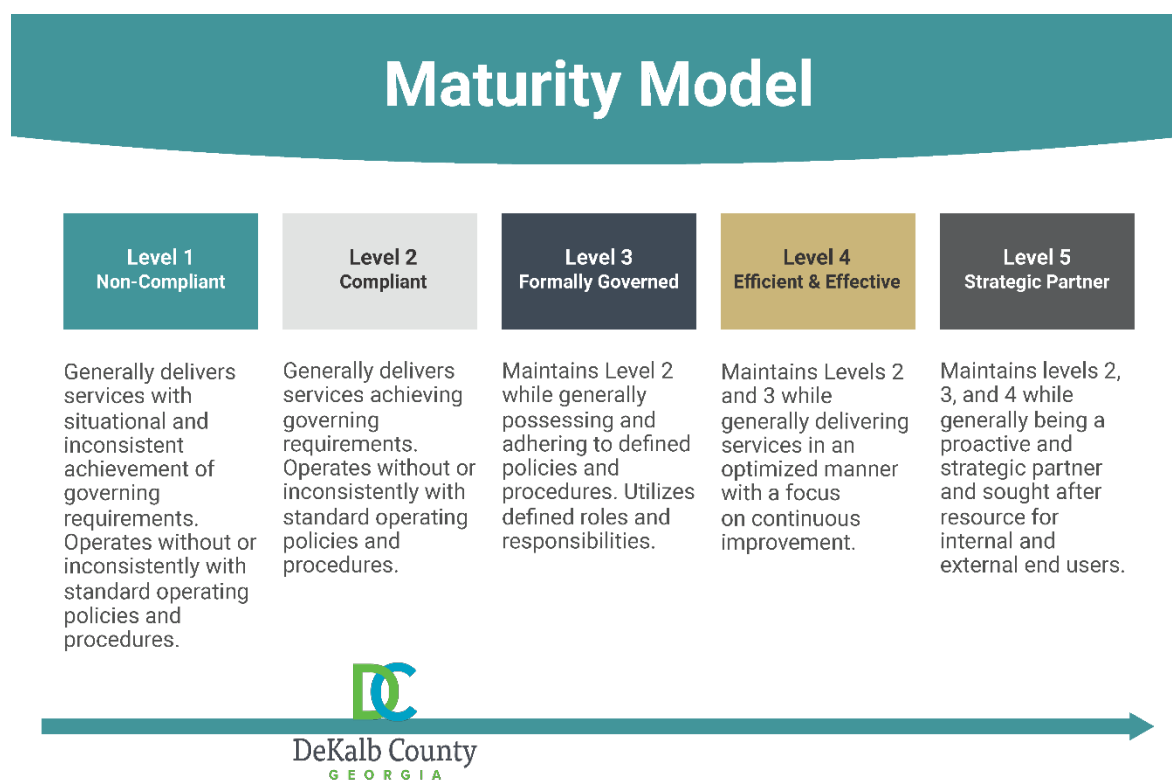
Within the Department, the culture is divisive. All staff communicated to M& their commitment to preparing DeKalb County for, and assisting DeKalb County in responding to and recovering from emergencies, but individuals do not always believe that others in the Department share that focus on the mission and priorities. There is a lot of mistrust and concern about consistency and timeliness of information shared through the chain of command. Staff note that the chain of command may not be consistently followed, which can lead to confusion and inconsistent understanding of expectations, and application of instructions. The confusion and inconsistencies are exacerbated by the lack of protocols, policies, and procedures, and can lead to concerns with insubordination and at-risk behavior. The environment feels emotionally charged, and can make collaboration, a key element of emergency management, challenging.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

The most recent update to the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan was adopted by all of DeKalb County's municipalities, which is an uncommon achievement.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of DEMA as Level 2: Compliant.

The Department meets the minimum standards of GEMA requirements for a County emergency management agency. What is largely prohibiting the Department from moving to a strategic, collaborative, and effective Department is the lack of foundational components needed to build a more strategic and effective Department. The lack of formal processes and procedures has created a culture of reliance on institutional knowledge, and can also create conflict when employees with different backgrounds and experiences disagree about protocol or next steps. There does not appear to be a consistent tone at the top about the sense of urgency needed to address issues or concerns identified in the AAR-IPs, or prioritization of training of partners and collaborators.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: There are limited differences in the job descriptions for Emergency Management Director, Emergency Management Deputy Director, and Emergency Management Supervisor. Additionally, job duties as described in the job descriptions did not align with how duties were described in interview with M&J, such as responsibility for the EOC being reported as the responsibility of the Emergency Management Supervisor, while the job description reflects this as the responsibility of the Deputy Director. These departures from the job descriptions and assignment of other duties may result in core functions being undervalued, or unable to be completed in the available timeframe.

Recommendation 1: DEMA leadership should identify and define the essential functions of the office, and update the job descriptions and workload to ensure consistent and equitable distribution of workload and assignments. If the essential functions cannot be performed within the current management framework, DEMA should consider if workload can be assigned to the Emergency Management Specialists, or if additional positions, such as those focused on training exercises and/or volunteer management, are needed.

Observation 2: There is misalignment between the job duties of the Administrative Assistant as described by the Administrative Assistant, as described by the Emergency Management Director, and as reflected in the job description.

Recommendation 2: The Emergency Management Director and Administrative Assistant should work with Human Resources to determine if the duties as performed should be modified to reflect the job description. If the Emergency Management Director desires the Administrative Assistant to serve in a capacity other than what is described in the job description, proper steps should be followed to determine if this position can be reclassified.

Observation 3: There has been significant turnover in the Emergency Management Specialist position, with the average tenure being well under two years. This turnover may be exacerbated by the lack of opportunities for growth or advancement, other than a single Supervisory position.

Recommendation 3: DEMA should work with Human Resources to evaluate the creation of a Senior or Lead Emergency Management Specialist position.

Observation 4: DEMA maintains an active working relationship with the local ARES group, and has established the Emergency Management Response Team ("EMRT") to serve as volunteer support during emergency operations and other support events. Currently, there is not currently an MOU in place between the local ARES group and the County to govern utilization of ARES personnel and equipment during emergency response events.

Recommendation 4: The County should formalize their relationship with ARES through an MOU that defines deployment of ARES personnel and equipment during emergency response activation.

Observation 5: Currently, staff who are identified to serve in ESF functions within the Emergency Operations Center during the declaration of an emergency are not trained by DEMA in the ICS Framework that governs the operation of the EOC, nor the roles and responsibilities of each ESF. While some individuals have received training as a part of their employment, or within prior roles, the lack of consistent understanding of the framework and deployment of the ICS command structure may put the County at risk of failure of the EOC, or inadequate or untimely response by an ESF who may not fully understand their role.

Recommendation 5: DEMA should ensure that all designated ESFs have received ICS 700 and ICS 800 training, at a minimum. Additional drills and exercises should be developed and implemented to ensure understanding of roles and responsibilities.

DEMA may also want to consider getting one or more staff members certified as ICS trainers.

Observation 6: DEMA lacks a multi-year plan that defines the proposed schedule of drills, tabletops, and live exercises that DEMA will coordinate and host.

Recommendation 6: DEMA should develop a three-to-five-year plan of trainings, workshops, drills, tabletops, and exercises that DEMA will coordinate and host. At a minimum, the plan should consider the results of prior exercises and drills, and should prioritize high significance risks identified in the LEOP and/or the HMP.

Observation 7: DEMA has several pieces of response equipment, such as a mobile command center, that are currently parked in the open parking lot behind the County's Public Safety Headquarters. Leaving equipment out and susceptible to the elements increases the potential for deterioration and damage due to exposure.

Recommendation 7: DEMA should coordinate with the rest of Public Safety to identify the funds to purchase or build drive under shelters or carports, to protect some of the specialty public safety vehicles currently parked at the Public Safety Headquarters.

Observation 8: Currently, the County only has a single weather monitoring station installed at the Public Safety Headquarters in Tucker. Even stationary weather monitoring stations only have coverage areas measured in the tens of miles, at best.

Recommendation 8: The County should invest in additional weather stations, either portable or stationary, to install at fire stations and police precincts throughout the County, to enhance the coverage area and allow for more accurate hazard analysis, which can aid in determining appropriate safety responses.

Observation 9: DEMA does not currently maintain a special needs or vulnerable populations registry within CodeRED, which the County uses for emergency communications.

Recommendation 9: DEMA should consider establishing a special needs or vulnerable populations registry within CodeRed, to allow for targeted messaging to vulnerable populations, to allow them a means of communication with DeKalb County around additional assistance or support in transport to shelters.

Observation 10: The current Emergency Operations Center contains many of FEMA’s recommended elements, but the location of the primary and backup EOC may be in at-risk facilities. Additionally, DEMA has limited storage capacity within the Public Safety Headquarters.

Recommendation 10: M&J understands that DeKalb County is undertaking a Facilities Master Plan. DEMA should share FEMA guidance on Emergency Operations Centers, as well as industry practices related to centralized storage and distribution to determine if an existing or planned County building may meet some of these requests.

Observation 11: Of the After-Action Reports (“AARs”) reviewed by M&J, all identified improvement plans contained a period of action of one year. Identified opportunity for improvement and associated implementation should be carefully considered within the potential risk the identified concern poses, as well as how quickly it is reasonable to implement actions. Additionally, the Emergency Management Director identified that while DEMA is regularly tracking the status of implementation, there is not a formal tracking or update process to document their tracking of efforts. AARs should have meaningful periods of action and DEMA should be tracking implementation formally.

Recommendation 11: DEMA should update the improvement plan procedures to ensure care is taken in assigning a designation period of action that is commensurate with the identified improvement’s complexity and risk posed to actual EOC response and operations.

DEMA should also establish a tracking mechanism, such as a SharePoint or other site that tracks all of the active improvement plans, the current status of individual elements, and identify any barriers to implementation. There should be regular review and evaluation of prior implementation plans to determine if actions taken have reduced the risk or improved the perceived weakness.

Observation 12: There is a lack of complete, up-to-date, working processes, procedures, and guidance for DEMA staff and volunteers. This lack of guidance documentation may be contributing to the confusion, mistrust, and concern throughout the department about roles, responsibilities, and operating protocols.

Recommendation 12: Once DEMA has established strategic planning priorities and key functions, it needs to establish the standard operating procedures associated with the complete implementation of key functions and priorities. These documents should set clear expectations about chain of command, protocols of operations, and specific steps to take to mitigate risk to self and the community while performing emergency management functions.

Conclusion

We would like to thank all seven DEMA employees for making time to meet with our team and share perspective about their roles. Ultimately, DEMA is meeting the minimum standards of GEMA requirements for emergency management but has a number of opportunities to become a more strategic and effective department. DEMA will need to focus on documented processes and procedures, creating and supporting a culture of consistency and effectiveness, and consistent outreach and education to internal partners and external stakeholders.

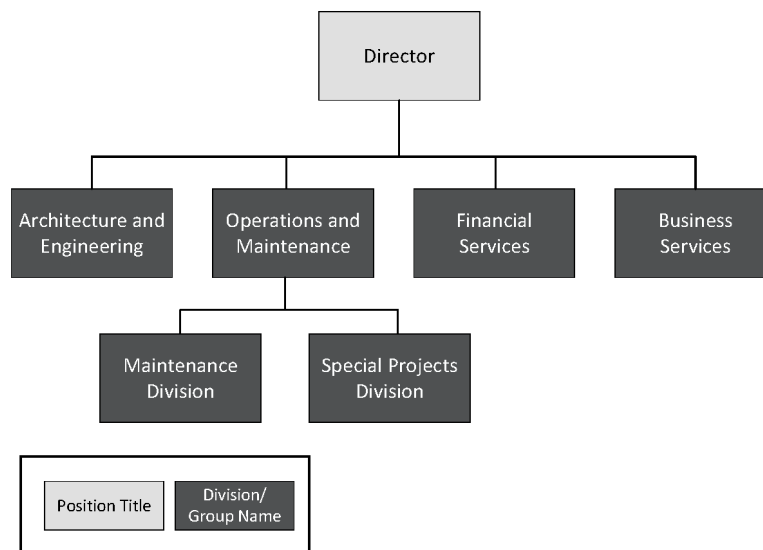
By beginning to implement the recommendations contained in this report, DEMA can continue to mature and improve its position as a strategic and proactive partner in preparing DeKalb County to respond to any number of emergencies.

3.F Facilities

Introduction

The Facilities Department (“Facilities” or “Department”) manages the planning, construction, renovation, operation, and maintenance of DeKalb County’s facilities, including properties owned and leased by the County. Facilities also provides several miscellaneous services to support general County functioning, including operating the County’s mailroom and supporting special events throughout the County.

Organization



Facilities is led by the Director of Facilities Management (“Director”), who reports directly to the Chief Operating Officer (“COO”). The Director oversees all Facilities operations, including the Department’s strategic planning and operations. Facilities contains four component areas:

- Architecture and Engineering
- Operations and Maintenance (“O&M”)
- Financial Services
- Business Services

Architecture and Engineering

Architecture and Engineering (“A&E”) contains a Deputy Director of Facilities Management (“Deputy Director”) and seven Project Managers. The A&E Deputy Director reports to the Director. Six of the seven Project Managers report to the Deputy Director, while the remaining Project Manager reports to the Director. The Deputy Director manages most of the Project Managers and works with other Facilities and County leadership to develop forward-looking facilities strategies for the County. The Deputy Director also assists in the management and administration of County facility leases. The Project Managers manage the planning and execution of the construction of new County facilities and renovation of existing County facilities.

A&E’s current Project Managers are all experienced professionals in their field, with significant experience in similar roles at other large government entities or in the private experience prior to coming to Facilities. Facilities does not have a pipeline to develop Project Manager talent and relies on hiring skilled staff away from other entities. Additionally, A&E provides Project Managers with highly limited opportunities for promotion or career growth, which means that Project Managers typically must leave the County if they wish to advance in their careers. As the Project Managers become intimately involved with the projects that they manage, the departure of a Project Manager can leave a significant knowledge gap that A&E’s remaining staff which may cause them to lose time coming up to speed on active projects.

Operations and Maintenance

Operations and Maintenance (“O&M”) is overseen by a Deputy Director, who oversees and plans O&M’s activities, including maintenance and repairs of County facilities, the execution of special projects or events that the Department has been tasked with, and operation of the County’s mailroom. O&M contains two divisions:

- Maintenance Division
- Special Projects Division

Maintenance Division

The Maintenance Division is led by a Superintendent, who manages the Maintenance Division’s six operational teams. Each of the Maintenance Division’s operational teams is responsible for conducting repairs and maintenance related to their assigned service area. The Maintenance Division’s operational teams provide these six functions:

- Housekeeping and Events
- Electrical
- Carpentry (including general carpentry as well as work related to drywall, floors, ceilings, doors, and locks)
- Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (“HVAC”)
- Plumbing
- Fire Safety

The five operational teams other than Fire Safety are led by a Supervisor. The Supervisors each oversee the various tradespeople in their teams. The Housekeeping team includes Housekeeping staff. The Electrical team includes Electricians and Senior Electricians. The Carpentry team includes Carpenters and Locks and Security staff. The HVAC team includes HVAC Technicians and Senior HVAC Technicians. The Plumbing team includes Senior Plumbers. Fire Safety is primarily the responsibility of a single Facilities Management Coordinator

The Maintenance Division regularly utilizes contractors to supplement its operational teams and/or to conduct work that the operational teams may not have the staffing, specialized equipment, or specific skills to carry out. The Supervisors of each operational team manage the use of contractors related to their functional area.

The operational teams each maintain an on-call rotation, ensuring that the team is able to respond to after-hours emergency maintenance requests. Maintenance Division staff do not receive a stipend or other supplemental pay for serving as their team's on-call staff, although the staff do receive time-and-a-half overtime for any hours worked above 40 in a given week.

Special Projects Division

The Special Projects Division, which includes grounds and warehouse maintenance, O&M administration, and the County's mailroom, is led by a Senior Consultant, although this employee typically utilizes the unofficial title of Special Projects Manager internally. The grounds and warehouse team, which maintains the grounds around County facilities and helps to prepare for County events, is led by a Grounds and Warehouse Supervisor, who reports to the Senior Consultant, and also includes several Crew Workers. A Management Analyst I manages the Department's purchasing cards ("P-cards"); administers the Department's modules in Cityworks, the County's enterprise asset management ("EAM") software suite; and tracks O&M's performance against its budget. The mailroom's four staff collect mail and packages from County facilities for delivery through the United States Postal Service ("USPS") or private carriers and distribute mail and packages received through USPS or private carriers to County facilities. The Special Projects Division's two Administrative Specialists process invoices received from O&M's vendors and work with the Purchasing and Contracting Department and Accounts Payable staff within the Finance Department to ensure that invoices are paid.

Financial Services

Financial Services works with the Purchasing and Contracting Department to administer the Department's contracts and works with the Office of Management and Budget to administer the Department's budget, including the annual budget request and any mid-year budget adjustments or amendments that may be required. Financial Services is led by a Management Analyst II, who reports to the Director. An Administrative Specialist supports the Management Analyst II.

Business Services

Business Services performs the Department's internal Human Resources ("HR")-related functions, including administering payroll and performing Departmental orientation of new staff. The sole employee dedicated to Business Services, an Administrative Coordinator, also serves as the Director's executive assistant and the Department's office manager.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

Strategic Priorities

Facilities currently has one strategic priority, which is conducting a Facility Condition Assessment. The County last conducted a Comprehensive Facilities Condition Assessment approximately a decade ago, in which third-party contractors reviewed the condition, lifespan, and maintenance needs of all County facilities. A&E is currently planning for the current Facility Condition Assessment to be slightly different than the assessment performed a decade ago. As currently planned, the ongoing Facility Condition Assessment will include a one-time comprehensive assessment of the County's entire facilities inventory, performed by a mix of three A&E vendors, as well as ongoing American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers ("ASHRAE") Level 2 Energy Audits ("L2 Energy Audit") of a selection of facilities each year. The current plan for the Facility Condition Assessment does not include a workforce needs assessment, which evaluates current and planned future staffing levels of all County departments to understand their facility-related needs, including office space, equipment space, and parking space requirements.

A&E plans for the comprehensive portion of the current Facility Condition Assessment (*i.e.*, the portion that involves a one-time assessment of the County's entire facilities inventory) to produce a digital record of the current state of the County's facilities, including their anticipated lifespans and maintenance needs. A&E then plans to upload this comprehensive assessment into CloudVergent360 ("CV360"), the County's enterprise resource planning ("ERP") software suite. A&E plans to continually update the comprehensive assessment in CV360, with the intent that this continual update process will ensure that Facilities will always have an up-to-date assessment of the condition of its facilities and will not have to conduct new County-wide facility assessments in the future.

A&E is contracting with a third-party to perform L2 Energy Audits of a selection of approximately 10 facilities per year, prioritizing buildings identified by the A&E Deputy Director as buildings in particular need of energy efficiency improvements or where energy efficiency improvements likely will have the greatest impact. The final reports of each L2 Energy Audit include a list of priority energy efficiency improvement items, including estimated costs, that are recommended for each facility in order to improve energy efficiency and reduce facility operating costs. A&E has not identified funding sources for implementing the energy efficiency improvements recommended in L2 Energy Audits other than general Facilities funding.

Key Duties and Responsibilities

Architecture and Engineering

A&E's key duties and responsibilities include:

- Project Management
- Facilities Planning and Strategy

Project Management

A&E's Project Managers manage the construction of new County facilities and renovation of existing County facilities, beginning with conceptual design and planning and running through the completion of the construction process. Construction projects begin when a project is requested, typically by a County department, at which point the A&E Deputy Director assigns a Project Manager to the project. Some Project Managers have distinct specialties, such as one Project Manager with a background in landscape architecture and one project manager with a background in technical electrical and HVAC work, but most projects are assigned based on availability. The Project Manager then determines if funding for the project already exists or if the requestor department needs to work with the Office of Management and Budget ("OMB") to secure project funding. OMB currently does not have processes in place that require departments to work with A&E to develop project cost estimates when developing project funding requests, which means that requestor departments may have obtained funding before beginning the project development process with A&E that is not sufficient to cover design and construction costs, necessitating budget adjustments.

A&E maintains a roster of five "on-call" architecture firms, each of which is signed to a five-year indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity ("IDIQ") contract for architectural services. For most projects, the Project Manager selects one of the five "on-call" architecture firms to provide architecture, design, and engineering services for the project, basing the selection on both the alignment between the project and any specialties that the "on-call" firms may have as well as an effort to balance workload between the "on-call" firms. A&E may choose not to utilize an IDIQ contract for certain projects and instead work with the Purchasing and Contracting Department to send the architecture, design, and engineering services out to bid. The Project Manager works with the selected architecture firm and requesting department to develop a project plan.

A&E incorporates standardized guidelines provided by O&M regarding building systems details during the project planning process but typically does not actively include O&M staff in the planning process. A&E does not have any standardized guidelines regarding interior design, instead allowing each architecture firm's own interior design staff to conduct interior design as they see fit, often incorporating unique design requests from the requestor department. The lack of interior design standards results in inconsistencies across the County's various facilities, which both creates a lack of cohesion and prevents O&M from realizing efficiencies that may result from the use of standardized materials and finishes across the County.

After design has been finalized, the Project Manager works with the Purchasing and Contracting Department to send the construction management portion of the project out to bid and evaluate bid responses. Once the construction management contract has been awarded and approved, the Project Manager then oversees the construction process, including performing regular on-site inspections to verify construction manager performance and address challenges that may arise during the construction process. At the end of the construction process, the Project Manager arranges a final site inspection and walkthrough where the construction manager provides O&M with information necessary for maintaining and operating the new or renovated facility.

Project Managers are responsible for continually monitoring the budgets of each of their projects to ensure that the projects are proceeding according to budget and identify the need for potential budget adjustments and address them as early as is reasonably possible. Each Project Manager has a project management meeting approximately monthly with the A&E Deputy Director during which they update the Deputy Director on the status of each of their projects.

Facilities Planning and Strategy

A&E works with the Director and County leadership to develop the County's overall facilities strategy and perform a variety of related tasks, including conducting the Facility Condition Assessment discussed earlier in this section of this report as well as involvement in lease management and the development of County master plans. The Deputy Director has become involved in the management of the County's leases for several specific properties where the Deputy Director has reported helping the County better take advantage of the terms of existing leases as well as brought in third-party advisors to assist the County in lease renewal negotiations.

A&E also prepares a "master plan" for key County facilities, which provides a blueprint for the development, renovation, and expansion of major County facilities in alignment with the County's overall strategic goals. A&E updates its facilities master plan annually.

Operations and Maintenance

O&M's key duties and responsibilities include:

- Facility Maintenance and Repairs
- Facility Operations
- Special Events
- Mailroom Operations
- O&M Administration
- Access Card Management

Facility Maintenance and Repairs

The staff in the Electrical, Carpentry, HVAC, and Plumbing teams in O&M's Maintenance Division manage repairs and maintenance of County facilities related to their particular trade. O&M uses a ticketing system in Cityworks to manage repair and maintenance items. For preventive maintenance, the Supervisors manually create tickets based on maintenance schedules, as staff availability permits. User departments submit repair tickets through a dedicated Cityworks portal, which directs the repair item to the relevant Supervisor. The Supervisor then assigns the ticket to one of their staff as available. The staff travels to the facility and reviews the repair to identify the problem and determine what repair is needed. O&M's current staffing levels are not sufficient to allow O&M to address all repair and maintenance items with in-house staff, so Facilities utilizes a mix of third-party contractors and in-house employees to perform repairs, with Supervisors determining how best to respond to each repair request. In the event of an emergency facilities maintenance issue, staff throughout the County are encouraged to call the Maintenance Division's Superintendent directly in order to escalate the issue and prioritize a prompt response to the event.

Due to the volume of maintenance and repair work placed on each team, the Supervisors tend to assign contractors to perform more intensive, involved, or long-term repairs so that Department staff can focus on quicker “break/fix” repairs in order to maintain flexibility and availability to respond quickly to new tickets and/or address emergency issues, even though staff typically possess the skills and experience to conduct many of the larger or more involved repair projects. O&M’s contractors also use the Cityworks platform to receive repair and maintenance tickets and log repairs and maintenance that they perform.

Current O&M budgets and O&M budgets from the recent past have supported enough staff or usage of contractors to supplement in-house staff to address maintenance requests but staff attest that the available budget and staffing have not been sufficient for O&M to address many preventive maintenance needs. As a result, the County’s facilities have reportedly accumulated a significant amount of deferred maintenance. The high levels of deferred maintenance in County facilities increases the failure rate of building systems and adds to the repair burden placed on O&M staff, further reducing availability for conducting preventive maintenance. Due to the high levels of deferred maintenance and significant repair workloads, some O&M Supervisors do not consistently create tickets for certain lower-priority preventive maintenance items, knowing that their teams will likely not be able to address the items. Additionally, Cityworks does not include any ticket prioritization or preview functionality, which can make navigating tickets and identifying priority tickets more challenging for staff while in the field. O&M has not conducted a cost assessment to evaluate potential cost savings that may come from hiring additional staff in order to reduce the County’s usage of outside contractors.

Due to O&M’s reported limited budget, the Department does not regularly conduct scheduled replacements of many building systems at the end of their scheduled lifespans and has instead adopted a “use it ‘till it breaks” approach to system and component replacement. This approach may reduce the frequency at which O&M is replacing building systems and their components, but it increases the risk of catastrophic failures and likely increases overall O&M replacement costs. For example, declining to replace water heaters at the end of their scheduled lifespans and instead only replacing them at the time of failure often results in leaks that can damage drywall, ceilings, carpeting, and other building systems, increasing total O&M costs and workload.

The Maintenance Division’s Fire Safety function is slightly different than the other Maintenance Division teams involved in Facility Maintenance and repairs, in that it oversees the inspection, maintenance, and repair of fire safety equipment, including smoke detectors and fire suppression systems, and elevators in County facilities. The Facilities Management Coordinator performs inspections of some equipment, but additional equipment inspection as well as most maintenance and repair tasks are performed by contractors.

Facility Operations

The staff in the Custodial team in O&M's Maintenance Division and staff in the Grounds and Warehouse team in O&M's Special Projects Division manage day-to-day custodial, groundskeeping, and warehouse operations. The Custodial team manages a set of contractors that provide custodial and pest control services throughout the County's facilities. The Custodial team monitors contractor performance in order to ensure that County facilities remain in a "visitor ready" state. The Grounds and Warehouse team's grounds-related operational duties also primarily consist of overseeing and managing third-party landscaping contractors that perform the work of maintaining the exteriors of County facilities. Grounds and Warehouse staff directly manage the Facilities portion of the County warehouse, which houses both a large stockpile of COVID-related supplies (including personal protective equipment as well as COVID tests) and general Facilities items, such as seasonal decorations or surplus furniture. Stores of parts and material used for maintenance and repairs are maintained by the specific teams that use the material. The Grounds and Warehouse team uses an Excel spreadsheet to track the items that they manage in the warehouse.

Special Events

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Facilities was assigned with executing significant parts of the County's COVID response, including managing special events held at County facilities, such as testing and vaccination centers. Facilities has since taken on performing similar services for a variety of non-COVID events, including CEO or Board of Commissioners ("BoC") press events and donation drives. Staff are assigned to perform a variety of services, including collecting donations, setting up and taking down equipment, and advance site preparation. Staff from throughout the Maintenance Division and Special Projects Division's Grounds and Maintenance team are assigned miscellaneous event tasks, but staff within certain teams may be called in to handle particular tasks related to their areas of specialty, such as staff on the Electrical team being called in to set up power and/or audiovisual systems in advance of an event. For events that occur outside of scheduled work hours, Facilities utilizes the on-call staff to set up equipment for events, take down equipment after events, or staff events taking place on nights, weekends, or holidays. O&M's budget does not include specific provisions for supplies or labor utilized for special events, meaning that all resources spent by the Department on providing special events come out of the general O&M budget that is also used for repairs, preventive maintenance, and facility operational costs.

Mailroom Operations

Staff within the Special Projects Division manage the County's mailroom, including picking up outgoing mail and packages from County facilities, stamping outgoing mail as appropriate, delivering outgoing mail and packages to the local Post Office or private shipper, collecting mail and packages from the Post Office or private shipper, and distributing collected mail and packages to their designated recipients.

O&M Administration

Staff within the Special Projects Division handle a variety of administrative tasks related to O&M, including Cityworks administration, P-card management, vendor invoice processing, and budget tracking. Cityworks administration responsibilities include creating and removing accounts for O&M staff and vendors as necessary as well as updating employee vehicle assignments to align with documents periodically provided by the Fleet Management Division of the Public Works Department. P-card management responsibilities include reviewing purchases in the P-card provider's online portal, collecting receipts from P-card users, and sending receipts and associated purchase justifications to the County's P-card Administrator. Vendor invoice processing involves both working with the Purchasing and Contracting Department to submit requisitions for conversion to purchase orders as well as working with the Finance Department's Accounts Payable function to process payments to vendors. O&M's budget tracking primarily focuses on the contractor budgets for the Department's facility maintenance and repair function and facility operations functions. Special Projects Division staff use CV360 to produce daily reports showing expenditures against budget and ensure that the relevant Supervisors and leadership are aware of remaining budget amounts and any budget-related trends that may be emerging.

Access Card Management

O&M works alongside the HR Department to administer the access card system that the County uses to secure many County facilities. HR is responsible for collecting information from users about what access cards are needed and what permissions should be granted to each card, notifying O&M of access card requests and needs, and distributing access cards to County staff and vendors, while O&M is responsible for providing, programming, activating, and deactivating access cards. HR uses an online form to submit access card programming, activation, and deactivation requests to O&M. For access cards being prepared for part-time staff or County vendors, HR's access card submissions through the online form do not always include all information necessary for card creation and maintenance.

Financial Services

Financial Services has three primary functions:

- Contract Administration
- Budget Administration
- Financial Administration

Contract Administration

Financial Services works with the Purchasing and Contracting Department and the end users within the Department, such as the Maintenance Division's maintenance and repair teams and A&E, to manage the Department's contracts with its various third-party vendors. Financial Services staff tracks spending against the contracts to ensure that the users within the Department are aware of spend to date and funds remaining available on each contract. Financial Services also prepare and submit any change orders that the Department may need to request on contracts.

Budget Administration

Financial Services works with Department leadership and OMB to develop the Department's annual budget request as well as any mid-year budget adjustment requests that the Department may make throughout the fiscal year. Budget requests are developed based on past expenditures as well as anticipated future needs, although the Department does not utilize any formal methodologies to estimate future funding and/or staffing needs based on facility characteristics, such as age, size, construction type, or usage. Financial Services also works with A&E and OMB to ensure that requestor departments have sufficient budget capacity for potential construction projects. Finally, Financial Services compiles various performance measures into statistics to respond to OMB requests for statistics related to Departmental performance for use in the budgeting process.

Financial Administration

Financial Services is involved with several aspects of general Departmental financial administration. Financial Services' Management Analyst II serves as a Level 1 approver for Department requisitions, meaning that they can provide initial approval of requisitions up to \$5,000. Financial Services also works to ensure that costs are properly allocated for projects that receive funding through other County departments or agencies.

Business Services

Business Services' primary function is managing the Department's internal HR function, including payroll administration, overtime management, and first-line conflict resolution. Business Services also reminds staff to participate in and assists staff with registering for periodic County-provided training courses on interpersonal communications, leadership, and office skills.

Business Services also functions as the Director's executive assistant and performs miscellaneous tasks as assigned by the Director.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

Facilities maintains at least partial documentation of a significant share of the Department's functions, but much of this documentation is not finalized, comprehensive, or regularly updated.

A&E has developed process documents at least partially covering most parts of the project management process and updates the documents periodically, although it does not have a process in place for regularly reviewing and updating process documents to validate their alignment with actual practices.

The Supervisor of each O&M team maintains a scope of work for their service for use in procuring contractor services but does not maintain a true process document detailing standardized Departmental processes for carrying out their duties. O&M's Special Projects Division is in the process of developing a manual for mailroom operations, although this document has not yet been finalized. O&M has developed a manual for use in training Maintenance Division staff on how to perform basic tasks in Cityworks on their County-issued iPads.

Financial Services maintains a reference document that details portions of the contract management process as well as overviews of several daily processes, but this document is not a comprehensive manual of all Business Services functions. Business Services does not maintain any standardized process documentation.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

Architecture and Engineering

A&E tracks the status of its various construction and renovation projects through project progress reports and project budget sheets, which the Project Managers prepare in advance of their monthly project status meetings with the A&E Deputy Director. The project progress reports provide a general overview of the project's current state, including a brief project description, dated list of milestones, discussion of upcoming work, and advanced notice of any potential changes that may be needed to the project's planned timeline or budget. A&E staff compile the project progress reports from each month into a single Word document, but this compilation process only concatenates the individual reports and does not use the information provided in the reports to develop any performance metrics or "at a glance" summary information. As a result, the only way to use the project status reports to develop an understanding of the overall status of the several dozen projects that A&E may be managing at any one time is to read through the several dozen individual project reports.

The project budget sheets include a brief summary of the project's scope of work, an overview of the project's budget, and an update showing the project's performance to date against its budget. While all project budget sheets utilize the same general Microsoft Word document structure, they use a variety of different formats to present the associated financial information. The non-financial information presented on the project budget sheets often overlaps at least partially with the information included on the project progress reports. A&E staff compile the project progress reports from each month into a single Word document, but this compilation process only concatenates the individual reports and does not use the information provided in the reports to develop any performance metrics or "at a glance" summary information. As a result, the only way to use the project budget sheets to develop an overall understanding of the overall performance of the several dozen projects that A&E may be managing at any one time against their respective budgets is to read through the several dozen individual project budget sheets.

Operations and Maintenance

O&M uses Cityworks to collect all of its performance data, which primarily consists of repair tickets submitted from users throughout the County, preventive maintenance tickets created by Supervisors in accordance with County preventive maintenance schedules, and logs of maintenance and repairs conducted in response to tickets by O&M staff and contractors. The data repair and maintenance data currently being tracked through Cityworks includes information on workload and productivity per facility and per staff person, but does not include any financial information, such as repair or maintenance costs, that would allow Facilities to analyze the overall costs of maintaining each County facility in a usable state or develop projections of future facility maintenance and repair costs. This lack of information on facility maintenance and repair costs means that Facilities cannot effectively evaluate the financial tradeoffs between renovating or replacing facilities, or continuing operations at existing County facilities, particularly facilities where age and/or high levels of deferred maintenance contribute to higher-than-normal repair and maintenance demands.

O&M uses information tracked in Cityworks to evaluate the productivity of employees on the Maintenance Division's operational teams, with an informal target for each staff person to respond to an average of three maintenance or repair tickets per day, although some managers reported that they have difficulty creating reports in Cityworks to evaluate weekly staff productivity. As currently configured, O&M cannot use Cityworks data to differentiate between corrective maintenance work and preventive maintenance work.

O&M staff provide Department Financial Services staff and OMB with raw data from Cityworks, showing ticket volume and resolution information, as part of the Department's budgeting process. Financial Services staff and OMB staff assigned to work with Facilities process the data for use in preparing the Department's budget request – Facilities do not use the data products prepared by Financial Services and OMB for the budgeting process as part of its own performance management or strategic planning processes.

O&M does not regularly track any data related to County events or mailroom activity. Staff within the Special Projects Division review reports prepared in CV360 to track budget availability as well as to monitor the status of invoice and payment submissions.

Financial Services

Financial Services utilizes financial reports from CV360 to track budget availability and to monitor the status of invoice and payment submissions. Financial Services staff also work with OMB to analyze data provided by O&M to develop data products that are used in the Department's budget request.

Business Services

Business Services does not regularly utilize any performance data.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

Facilities generally has a dedicated staff that are passionate about the services that they provide to the County. Staff throughout the Department want to be able to take pride in their work, although resource shortages in O&M makes it difficult for staff, particularly within O&M but to a lesser degree across the Department as a whole, to feel as if they are providing an adequate level of facilities services. Many staff across the Department have identified that the Department's limited capacity for repairs and maintenance means that the Department has not had sufficient capacity to focus on "quality of life" facilities items, such as aesthetics, resulting in a perception that many County facilities are worn out and outdated.

Many O&M staff at all levels are disappointed by their current inability to dedicate the resources that they feel are needed to perform ongoing preventive maintenance and address the Department's significant backlog of deferred maintenance. Similarly, many skilled O&M staff are frustrated at the Department's reliance on outside contractors to perform many repairs and maintenance tasks, particularly more involved or highly skilled jobs, with O&M instead dedicating its own staff to quicker and simpler "break-fix" work.

Given the Department's limited resources for O&M work, staff are frustrated by the regular use of contractors, who are generally relatively more expensive than in-house staff, and the County's reported denial of budget requests from Facilities for additional O&M staff positions over the past several years. O&M staff take pride in their work, and attest that the work performed by contractors is often of lower quality than the work they would provide. O&M staff are also frustrated by their use as general County events staff, feeling like this work both does not utilize the technical skills that they have developed in their trade and also takes away from their significant repair and maintenance workloads.

Communications

Communication methods within each of the Department's service areas are generally successful, with close working relationships existing within O&M and within A&E, but communications between O&M and A&E could be improved. A&M and O&E are physically located in two separate County buildings, which may also be contributing to the perceptions of separate and reactive communications.

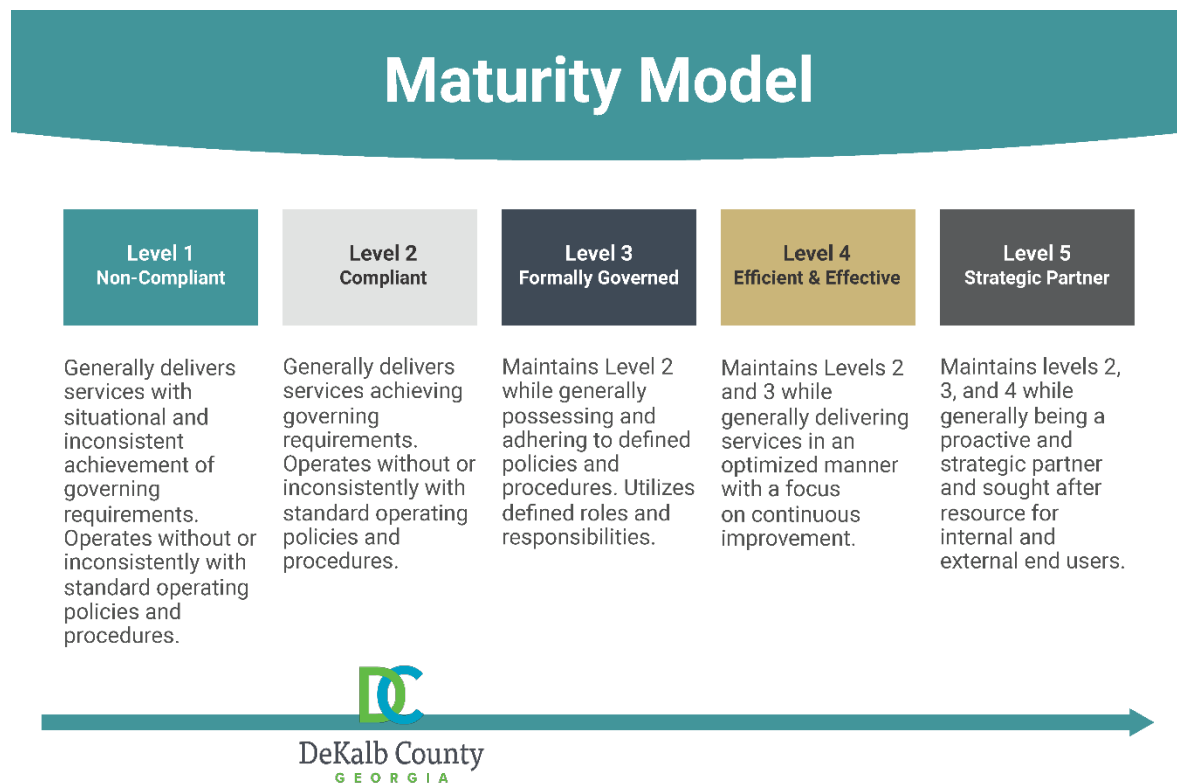
Currently, A&M and O&E staff primarily communicate in two ways, which are O&M's guidance to A&E regarding building systems preferences and the "handoff" meetings that take place at the conclusion of each A&E building project. These communications provide for a basic working relationship but do not allow for strategic alignment between the two parts of the Department. Introducing additional communications touchpoints between A&E and O&M, such as a monthly meeting between leaders and representatives from A&E and O&M to discuss project development and other relevant items, will allow for more proactive responses to challenges within A&E and O&M and allow for greater strategic coordination within the Department.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

The L2 Energy Audits that the Department is contracting with a third-party to perform on a selection of County facilities each year are conducted in accordance with ASHRAE standards. L2 Energy Audits are thorough evaluations of a structure's energy usage, including electricity, fossil fuels (*e.g.*, natural gas), and water, as well as evaluations of the impact of potential energy efficiency improvements, including environmental impacts and financial impacts. The L2 Energy Audits performed by the County include time-to-payback figures, indicating the amount of time that it would take for the savings produced by the recommended energy efficiency improvements to cover the cost of implementing the improvements. L2 Energy Audits are a common tool used in the process of obtaining the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design ("LEED") Existing Building certification, although Facilities is not currently planning to seek this certification.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 2: Compliant.

Facilities generally delivers services in accordance with its governance requirements, but its processes are not consistently captured in complete, finalized documentation. A number of Department processes are captured in finalized documentation, including A&E's project management function and a portion of Financial Services' processes, and Facilities is in the process of developing and finalizing several other pieces of guiding documentation, including documents covering mailroom processes and O&M administrative tasks. A number of other major processes, including functions related to the Department's Business Services function and O&M's primary operational and maintenance functions are largely undocumented. The current absence of process documentation for a significant portion of OMB functions makes the department reliant on institutional knowledge and increases the difficulty of onboarding future staff. One notable exception to the Department's general delivery of services in accordance with governance requirements is the fact that resource constraints have reportedly led to significant amounts of deferred maintenance.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: A&E houses a number of Project Managers, all of whom entered the Department with significant experience in their field in the private sector and/or other large government entities. Facilities does not currently have any positions within A&E to develop less experienced staff as project managers, leaving the Department reliant on external hiring to fill Project Manager positions in the future. Additionally, A&E does not currently provide its project managers with any notable opportunities for career growth or progression within the Department, which requires Project managers to leave the Department in order to advance their careers. Due to the level of expertise and in-depth knowledge that Project Managers have over their specific projects, the loss of project managers without "backups" in place can often significantly disrupt project progress.

Recommendation 1: The Department should consider introducing additional positions within the A&E department to allow for greater opportunities for career progression. In particular, A&E should consider introducing a position along the lines of a "Junior Project Manager" position, which can serve both to establish a talent pipeline by developing less experienced Project Manager and to provide staff that can serve as "backups" to ease the transition in the event that a Project Manager leaves Facilities. The Department may also consider introducing a position along the lines of "Senior Project Manager," which would provide Project Managers with opportunities for advancement and help the Department retain and attract particularly experienced staff that can be utilized to manage especially large or complex projects.

Observation 2: The Department is currently in the planning stages of conducting a new Facilities Condition Assessment. A&E, which is managing the execution of the Facilities Condition Assessment, envisions the comprehensive portion of the assessment, performed by a third-party, as a starting point for a new model of facilities condition tracking, based on continuous condition tracking and updating through a digital system that would eliminate the need for future comprehensive assessments. While continual tracking and updating processes are highly useful, “fresh” reassessments of facility condition at regular intervals are also critical pieces of maintaining an effective facilities condition inventory. Continuous assessments are not 100% perfect and may occasionally fail to include certain changes, particularly changes that occur over longer periods of time. Regular “fresh” reassessments of facility condition allow for both independent re-evaluation of condition and help to ensure that all changes to facility condition are included in the condition assessment as appropriate.

Recommendation 2: The Department should evaluate its current Facilities Condition Assessment plan, particularly the portion related to ongoing maintenance of its facilities condition inventory, to ensure that the plan includes provisions for periodic “fresh” reassessments of the condition of all facilities in addition to continuous condition tracking and updating. These reassessments may be performed by either third-party contractors or Facilities employees, as needed. In order to balance employee workload, the Department’s plan for maintaining its facility condition inventory may include provisions for staggered reassessments, rotating through the facilities to be assessed each year.

Observation 3: The Department is currently in the planning stages of conducting a new Facilities Condition Assessment. As currently planned, the upcoming Facilities Condition Assessment does not include a workforce needs assessment, which evaluates current and planned future staffing levels of all County departments to understand their facility-related needs, including office space, equipment space, and parking space requirements. Given the significant changes to facility usage produced by responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and considering potential future return-to-office policies, the Department may benefit from developing a clearer understanding of the County’s true facilities needs for use as part of its strategic planning process.

Recommendation 3: The Department should consider including a workforce needs assessment as part of its upcoming Facilities Condition Assessment. The Department should then incorporate the results of the workforce needs assessment in future strategic planning initiatives, preparing the Department to serve as a strategic partner to the County’s overall development and helping to ensure that facility limitations do not serve as a bottleneck on County growth.

Observation 4a: The Department does not currently have enough staff to conduct much of its repair and maintenance workload in-house and relies on contractors to supplement Department staff in completing required repairs. The Department’s current budget reportedly does not allow for it to complete all preventive maintenance tasks for the County’s building systems, resulting in significant levels of deferred maintenance.

Observation 4b: The Department has recently implemented the Cityworks EAM software suite to manage maintenance, repairs, and lifecycle analysis of County facilities. While the Cityworks suite is functional in receiving work orders from County users and assigning tickets to staff, the system's current configuration and usage does not provide for the tracking of financial information related to maintenance and repairs. As a result, the application does not achieve one of its primary aims, which is to help develop credible estimates of resource needs for repairs and maintenance of individual County facilities. Having the ability to evaluate resource demands by facility would allow the Department to operate more strategically by both moving to a facility-based budgeting methodology, where the Department develops its O&M budget request based off of actual expected costs for maintaining each facility, as well as by allowing for more informed analyses of the relative costs of continuing to use and renovating or replacing aging facilities.

Recommendation 4a: The Department should evaluate its Cityworks implementation to ensure that the system allows for the tracking of maintenance and repairs-related financial information necessary for the development of facility-specific maintenance cost estimates. Additionally, the Department should ensure that O&M staff and contractors are trained on the financial tracking systems in Cityworks and ensure that these data are entered regularly and accurately. If Cityworks is unable to provide the required financial tracking functionality, the Department should evaluate other options for tracking the required information.

Recommendation 4b: Once the Department has a system in place for tracking facilities costs, it should develop a facilities lifecycle management program that uses these data to determine each facility's resource needs, including both labor and financial needs. The Department should use the products of its facilities lifecycle management program to inform the Department's budgeting process by developing O&M budget requests utilizing each facility's estimated resource needs instead of past spending. The Department should also use the products of its facilities lifecycle management program to inform strategic planning by analyzing the relative costs of continued operation of aging or poorly maintained facilities and building systems against their renovation, refurbishment, or replacement.

Recommendation 4c: The Department should, in collaboration with OMB, the HR Department, and County leadership, use the products of its facility lifecycle management program to evaluate the relative costs of hiring additional O&M staff as opposed to the current usage of contractors to supplement O&M staffing and, based on the results of this evaluation, consider adjusting the Department's staffing levels and contractor budgets.

Observation 5: A&E occasionally works with departments to plan for facilities for which the Departments obtained budget approval for the project before A&E developed initial cost estimates. As a result, the budget allocations that the Departments have already received may not be sufficient to cover reasonable design and construction costs for the specified project, requiring future budget adjustments.

Recommendation 5: A&E should work with OMB to develop new processes related to approving departmental budget requests for facilities-related projects that require A&E to sign-off on a cost estimate before OMB approves the budget request. To facilitate this new procedure, A&E may wish to develop a "pre-project sheet" or similar document showing basic project specifications and A&E-approved cost estimates that departments are required to complete and submit to OMB as part of the facilities budget request process.

Observation 6: A&E does not have any standardized interior design guidelines for use by the County’s architectural services vendors, instead allowing interior design specialists at each vendor to design County facilities as they see fit and leveraging input from the end-user department. The lack of standardized interior design guidelines results in a wide variety of different interior design choices, including color palette, materials usage, finishes, and other details. This inconsistency from project to project reduces the County’s brand harmony and also prevents the Department from realizing efficiencies to construction and maintenance that may result from the use of a limited palette of standardized materials and finishes across many different County facilities.

Recommendation 6: The Department should consider contracting with an interior design specialist to develop a set of standardized interior design guidelines for use across County facilities, including specific color palettes and defined, limited palettes of materials and finishes for use in County facilities.

Observation 7: A&E’s project managers currently utilize Word templates to prepare two reports in advance of their monthly project status meetings with the A&E Deputy Director: project progress reports and project budget sheets. The two documents often contain a significant amount of overlapping information on project backgrounds, past progress, and status. Additionally, the project budget reports do not use a standardized format to display financial information. A&E staff currently compile the project progress reports and project budget sheets into comprehensive documents for each month, but this compilation process only consists of placing the reports into a comprehensive Word document and does not involve analysis or visualization of the information contained in the reports.

Recommendation 7a: The Department should evaluate its current Project Manager status reporting process and consider implementing a new system that consolidates all project update information into a single document. This document, which may be an Excel workbook, should use a standardized template to report all information, including using a standardized format for reporting budgetary information that allows for direct comparison of budget figures across different projects.

Recommendation 7b: The Department should consider performing additional analysis and/or data visualization as part of its process for compiling and consolidating its monthly Project Manager status reporting documents in order to allow for easy “at a glance” evaluation of overall project status, including progress against project schedule and expenditures against project budget.

Observation 8: The Department’s O&M staff are occasionally tasked with performing duties other than their specified maintenance and repair tasks, such as assisting in the setup, takedown, or operations of various County events. The Department’s O&M budget does not contain specific provisions for events operations, meaning that time and resources spent working events pulls from the same budget as the Department’s operations, maintenance, and repairs. Additionally, usage of Facilities staff for County events makes these staff unavailable for their primary workload, increasing the Department’s reliance on relatively more expensive contractors.

Recommendation 8: The County should evaluate its usage of Facilities Department staff as the County's on-call events team. If the County decides to continue utilizing the Facilities Department to handle event preparation and operations, the Department should consider building and funding a team dedicated to events operations to maximize the ability for the County's skilled trades staff to perform their designated functions. Additionally, the Department should consider recouping its events services costs by developing processes for charging County departments that host events for the time spent by Facilities staff working on events, including setup, event staffing, and takedown.

Observation 9: A number of Department processes are captured in finalized documentation, including A&E's project management function and a portion of Financial Services' processes, and Facilities is in the process of developing and finalizing several other pieces of guiding documentation, including documents covering mailroom processes and O&M administrative tasks, while several other major processes, including functions related to the Department's Business Services function and O&M's primary operations and maintenance functions are largely undocumented.

Recommendation 9: The Department should work to develop and finalize documentation of all major processes in procedures, including finalizing documents currently being developed related to mailroom functions and O&M administration tasks and developing documents related to the Department's Business Services function and the Department's facility operations and facility maintenance functions.

Observation 10: There are currently only two formal communications touchpoints between the Department's A&E and O&M units, which are O&M produced building systems guidelines used by A&E during project design and development and "handoff" meetings that take place at the conclusion of each A&E building project. These touchpoints accomplish their specific purposes but do not provide enough interaction between the two portions of the Department to develop a true strategic partnership. Additional touchpoints would allow for greater collaboration between A&E and O&M throughout the project development process, resulting in projects that better meet O&M's operational needs.

Recommendation 10: The Department should develop regular (potentially monthly) touchpoint meetings between A&E and O&M representatives and leadership to discuss projects in development and other items as relevant with an aim on enhancing strategic collaboration in the project development process.

Conclusion

The Facilities Department has two distinct but related functions: building and renovating County facilities, and maintaining and repairing those facilities. This bifurcated model can often cause challenges in prioritization and budget, but the Department has worked to provide meaningful services with limited resources.

The Department will need to continue to collect data to provide budgeting and staffing models to ensure more preventive and planned maintenance. Additional proactive efforts on the architectural and engineering side will help with project scheduling, workload management, and a cohesive look for DeKalb County. We would like to thank Departmental leadership for their time and resources, as well as their assistance in creating opportunities for us to meet with 23 staff and tour the O&M facility.

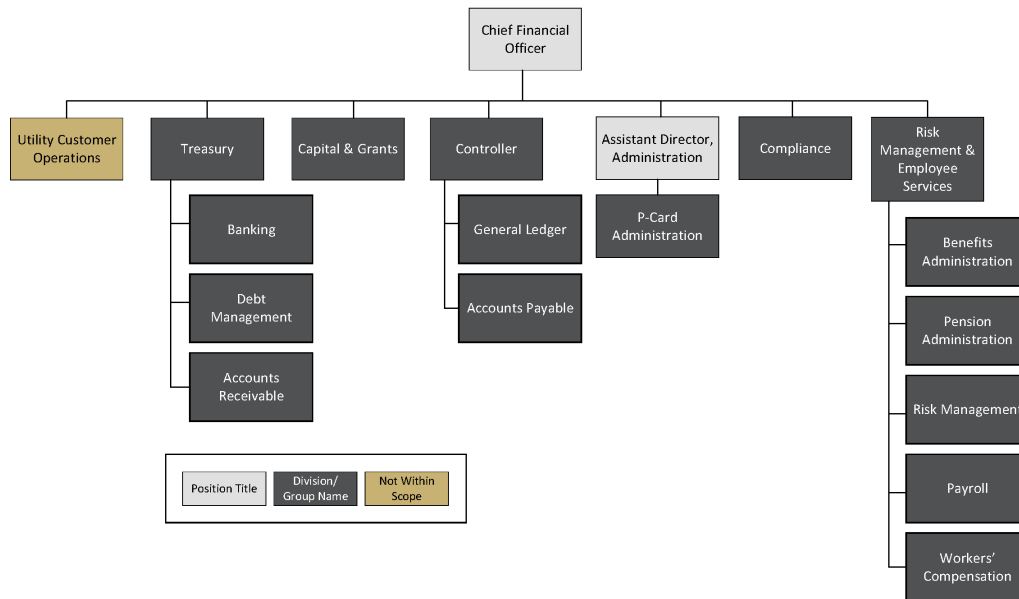
3.G Finance

Introduction

The Finance Department is responsible for providing oversight for all County expenditures and revenue collections and ensuring timely and accuracy financial reporting.

Organization

The Finance Department is organized into six divisions and is led by the Chief Financial Officer. The current organization chart is depicted below.



The Chief Financial Officer is supported by an Assistant Director over Administration who assists with customer service, human resources functions, and oversees the Purchasing Card (“P-Card”) Administrator. There are six divisions:

- Treasury
- Capital and Grants
- Office of the Controller
- Risk Management and Employee Services
- Compliance
- Utility Customer Operations

Treasury Division

The Treasury Division is responsible for cash and debt management functions, including banking, revenue collection, investments, and debt issuance and payments. The Treasury Division has three sections: Banking and Revenue, Accounts Receivable, and Debt Management. The Banking and Revenue section is led by a Revenue Manager, who oversees a Senior Accountant position that is currently vacant, and a Fiscal Assistant position.

The Accounts Receivable (“AR”) section is led by an Accounts Receivable Supervisor, who oversees three Senior Accounting Technician positions and a courier, who is responsible for picking up payments received at locations throughout the County and bringing them to the AR office for centralized pickup.

The Treasurer and a Senior Financial Officer share responsibility for debt administration, including bond preparation and issuance, post-issuance and disclosure requirements, and ensuring timely repayment.

Capital and Grants Division

The Capital and Grants Division (which is also referred to as the Program and Grants Division, or “PNG”) is led by an Assistant Director. This Division is responsible for coordinating with end-user departments for grant and capital budgeting, expenditures, and reporting. The Capital and Grants Division is also responsible for the annual Single Audit report. A Business Processor, Budget and Management Coordinator, and Grant Service Administrator all report directly to the Assistant Director. The Business Processor is primarily responsible for the County’s American Rescue Plan (“ARP”) subrecipient financial monitoring and programmatic reporting. The Grant Service Administrator assists end-user departments with grant applications, including navigating grants.gov.

The rest of the Division’s staff report to the Capital and Grants Manager. There are three Budget Management Grant Analysts focused on programmatic grant analysis and reporting, with another Budget Management Grant Analyst focused on capital grant analysis. An Internal Auditor, Senior, assists with two department’s analyst roles, along with subrecipient monitoring assistance to the Business Processor. There are two Senior Accountants who assist with receivables and reconciliation, month opening and closing procedures, audit preparation, drawdowns and reporting for assigned organizations, and are the leads on PNG’s CV360 implementation. Two Management Analysts also have assigned departments to support, along with risk assessments, general office administrative assistance, and other tasks. The Grant Coordinator is responsible for SPLOST project management, along with several grant funds management, posting of some revenues, and other duties.

Office of the Controller

The Office of the Controller is responsible for the central accounting, accounts payable activity, and capital asset management for the County. This division is organized into two sections: the General Ledger section and the Accounts Payable section. The Controller oversees the annual financial audit, compilation of financial statements, and preparation of the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (“ACFR”) for the County.

The General Ledger section is responsible for journal entries, bank account reconciliation, prepaid accounts, AP accruals, and supporting the annual financial audit. The General Ledger section is led by an Accounting Services Manager, who oversees a Senior Fiscal Officer, three staff Principal Accountants, and a temporary Principal Accountant.

During M&J's fieldwork, both the Controller position and the Accounting Services Manager over the General Ledger section were vacant, although the Accounting Services Manager role was filled during the conclusion of fieldwork. A Senior Fiscal Officer in the General Ledger section has been assisting in a number of Accounting Services Manager duties, as well as leveraging the Deputy Director over Treasury and some temporary staff to ensure there was continuity in the performance of General Ledger section duties.

The Accounts Payable section is led by an Accounting Services Manager, who oversees an Accounting Supervisor, an Administrative Assistant, and a Management Analyst I. The Accounting Supervisor oversees seven Accounting Technicians responsible for processing nearly all of the payments for DeKalb County.

Risk Management and Employee Services

The Risk Management and Employee Services Division is led by a Deputy Director and is responsible for managing payroll, pension administration, employee benefits, risk management and workers' compensation. Risk Management is organized into seven sections.

The Records Retention section is responsible for records management and also maintains a physical warehouse for the County. This section is led by a Records Manager who oversees two Records Technician Leads, and two warehouse workers.

The Department also includes a Health and Wellness Coordinator who leads the County's wellness program, creating health and wellness engagement opportunities for County employees. This includes walking challenges, vaccine events, health fairs, park walks, classes, as well as a newsletter promoting health and wellness information.

The Benefits Administration section includes a Manager and five support staff: a Healthcare Advocate, two Senior Specialists, and two Specialists. The Benefits Administration section is responsible for benefits administration for both the active and retired employee populations. The Manager is working to ensure that all of the section staff pass at least one class towards their Certified Employee Benefit Specialist certification annually, with the goal of having all section employees certified.

The Employee Services Manager is over the Payroll Division, responsible for the County's payroll processing for active employees, the pensioner population, and other special populations such as summer youth and poll workers. End-user departments also have internal staff designated as payroll coordinators. For larger departments, the payroll coordinator role is often a dedicated role, although in smaller departments this individual's time is often split between payroll and a number of other responsibilities. Within the Division, there are two Payroll Analysts, a Payroll Manager, and a Payroll Personnel Lead.

The Pension Administration Section, which includes two Pension Administrators, a Benefits Specialist, a Customer Care Representative, a part-time Benefits Specialist, and an additional contractor, is responsible for administering the County's pension, including enrollments, changes, lump sum payments, and staffing the Pension Board.

The Risk Management section is led by the Risk Control Manager, who oversees two Senior Risk Control Officers and an Administrative Assistant. The Risk Management Section is responsible for safety training, proactive risk mitigation planning, and safety inspections throughout the County.

The Workers' Compensation section is led by a Workers' Compensation Manager. Currently, this Section has two Workers' Compensation Adjusters, two Benefits Specialists who serve as adjusters and a vacant administrative assistant position. The County's workers' compensation program is self-insured and self-administered.

Compliance

The Compliance Division is responsible for a number of compilations and financial reviews and is staffed by four internal auditors – two Principal Internal Auditors and two Internal Auditors.

Utility Customer Operations

The final division, Utility Customer Operations, was not included in the scope of this assessment, and should be considered for a future assessment in concert with the Department of Watershed Management due to the interrelationship between the two organizations.

Staffing Analysis

A number of individuals within key leadership and management positions in Finance are nearing retirement. There is not consistent succession planning, which may cause issues with continuity of key functions. Additionally, some divisions are reliant on individuals who have either taken on roles as second careers after full retirements, or have come back in part-time roles post-retirement.

There are several vacancies within the Department that have been vacant for extended periods. The Senior Accountant role within Treasury has reportedly been vacant for five years, and managers report having to post the same position multiple times to get qualified applicants.

The Department also has challenges with the job descriptions and titles not aligning with the key duties. This impedes recruitment and hiring efforts, and also impacts retention efforts, as staff may have limited growth opportunities based on their title. Because the job title doesn't align with the duties and responsibilities, many staff have "working titles" that are used colloquially within the Department and the County.

Organizationally, Finance operates under informal relationships more so than through a formal organizational chart. During interviews, staff identified that certain positions reported to more than one person, noted informal secondary managers they may report to, or noted roles that they may back up in other divisions or sections.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

The Department's priority over the last 12 – 18 months was the implementation of the new financial system, CV360, a cloud-based Oracle enterprise resource planning ("ERP") system. The Human Resources Information System ("HRIS") modules of CV360 were implemented in 2022, but the financial system modules went live in August of 2024. There are still a number of bugs, challenges, and limitations in the CV360 environment that DOIT, Finance, and end-users are continuing to work through. As there are still functional challenges and limitations that must be addressed, many staff are not operating in a strategic mindset. Many of M&J's interviews with Finance Department staff discussed issues, challenges, and discrepancies in processes caused by perceived changes, limitations, questions, and uncertainties with CV360.

Resultant of the CV360 migration, a number of Department staff are now serving as primary liaisons for providing guidance and support on their modules within CV360. Assigned representatives may receive help desk tickets from Zoho Service Desk (the County's help desk ticketing system managed by DOIT), and Finance staff are expected to work with the submitter to resolve issues. If the ticket is not within the purview of the assigned Finance Department staff member, they may need to coordinate with DOIT or the third party assisting with continued implementation.

Accounts Payable

The Accounts Payable ("AP") section's seven Accounts Payable Technicians process approximately 2,000 – 3,000 invoices monthly for DeKalb County. This includes invoices that flow through the end-user departments, payments associated with payroll withholdings, rent and utilities, travel payments, excise tax payments, and nearly all other payments. AP is also responsible for processing interfund transfers that involve one department paying another department for goods or services, such as paying fleet for the cost of at fault repairs. Invoices come in via a generic inbox or through physical mail, although some end-user departments may also submit copies of the invoices directly to their assigned Technician. AP Technicians are assigned a portion of vendors using alphanumeric assignments, with exceptions related to travel, utilities, and payments for the Department of Law.

DeKalb County follows AP best practices and uses a three-way match before processing any payment. Invoices must be cross-referenced with the purchase order as well as the goods receipt to ensure accuracy and completeness of all payments. End-user departments are responsible for submitting the requisitions to the Purchasing and Contracting Department to issue a purchase order, and then the end-user department must "receive" the amount of goods or services against the purchase order, to confirm complete and accurate receipt. Once these two steps are completed, the invoice can be paid. If an invoice is submitted to AP prior to the end-user having completed the receiving step, the invoice is entered into CV360 and placed on hold until the other two steps have been completed. AP recently worked with DOIT to add a system-generated notification if a department's invoice is on hold, in addition to an email sent from the processing technician, as there were significant issues with the volume of invoices on hold.

Some recent CV360 changes have, according to staff, added challenges in processing. CV360 reportedly does not allow for duplication of entry details when entering multi-line invoices, so processing time has increased to allow for the additional manual entry. Staff understood that CV360 would offer a bulk payment spreadsheet that could be uploaded to CV360 for processing, but that is not currently available.

End-users are authorized to use a “punch out” system to electronically order certain goods. When the “punch out” request comes to AP for processing, it contains no identifying information other than the vendor name, which is inadequate detail to allow for invoice processing or three-way match.

The new iSupplier portal within CV360 also gives vendors some visibility into when the end-user department has gotten a copy of the invoice, but information available to vendors does not differentiate between when an end-user department acknowledges that it has a copy of the invoice and when it was processed by that department. Vendor calls and emails to AP have escalated, which requires AP to research where the payment may be, if not in AP’s queue.

The Management Analyst in Accounts Payable regularly reviews the invoices on hold report and liaises with end-user departments to encourage them to complete their portion of the process.

The Accounting Supervisor is responsible for the AP entry associated with wire payments. The AP entry of wire payments is separate from the bank processing of the wire payment, and typically is entered after the wire payment is made and confirmation has been generated. Processing information does not consistently include the payment accounting information, so there can be delays in creating the AP entry for the wire banking activity.

The AP section processes ACH payments daily, and payments made by physical check are processed once a week. For physical check payments, the Department utilizes positive pay, a process where the Accounting Supervisor uploads a weekly check file to the bank, and the bank compares presented checks against the check file, to ensure a match and to help reduce the risk of fraudulent checks. The AP Supervisor is responsible for decisioning checks that the bank may identify as not matching the available check files, and determining whether they are appropriate to pay, or should be rejected as fraudulent attempts.

Purchasing Card Program Administration

The County has one Purchasing Card Administrator to support approximately 110 purchasing cards (“pcards”) throughout the County. The pcard workload is too much for a single position to effectively oversee while also strategically reviewing usage for themes, trends, and compliance with County contracts and purchasing requirements. Additionally, the Pcard Administrator is responsible for the main phone line for the Finance Department, and must manually record messages for most of the Department. Because there is a single position, there is limited proactive review and trend analysis in the use of pcards, or review for potential development of additional contracts or pricing agreements. DeKalb County uses the Bank of America Works (“Works”) platform for pcard management.

End-user departments have three roles related to pcard administration. There are pcard holders – the cards are issued in their name and they should be the only individual using the card. Next are department purchasing cards representatives (“DPCRs”) that are responsible for uploading receipts and supporting documentation, entering financial information for all charges, and reconciling the monthly pcard statements. Finally, the department head is responsible for reviewing and approving all charges on the cards.

The Purchasing Card Administrator processes requests for new pcards, requests for changes in cardholder or DPCR, and special requests for use of the pcard. All these requests must be approved by the CFO. New cardholders or requests for cardholder credit limit level changes are also reviewed by the COO. Currently, these forms are all paper-based, and all routing is of the physical forms for review and signature.

The Purchasing Card Administrator is responsible for processing new cardholder requests, updating and closing accounts, making profile updates to user accounts and serving as the liaison with the Bank of America for issues such as card declines, questionable charges, or other usage issues.

Pcards are issued with certain merchant category codes ("MCCs") blocked from use, although there is a process for pcard holders to request temporary waivers of blocked MCCs. Cardholders or their DPCR may submit a Special Request Form requesting approval for non-standard use of pcards, such as travel, food and beverages, and conference registration and training costs. Special Request Forms can also include requests for temporary and permanent credit limit increases.

The Purchasing Card Administrator is also responsible for training for the cardholder, DPCR, and the department heads. The Purchasing Card Administrator provides live and virtual trainings. Currently there are no prerecorded trainings, nor mandatory refresher courses. Trainees only have to sign acknowledgement forms to confirm understanding of training. Leading practice introduces quizzes, or the use of testing questions to confirm understanding before authorizing use.

Currently, the Purchasing Card Administrator goes into the Works systems daily to export the prior day's postings. These are reviewed for general allowability. All purchasing card logs are uploaded to SharePoint; the County has an average of 500 transactions each month. DPCRs are verifying receipts and accounting coding and approving transactions in Works. DPCRs are also authorized to export their cardholder's cycle reports from Works to prepare the monthly reconciliation. Each cardholder's monthly report is batch scanned by the responsible DPCR to the Pcard Administrator, with the accounting codes, backup documentation, and appropriate approvals. The Pcard Administrator prepares a file with all of the month's transactions and their approved accounting information. A Systems Analyst on the CV360 ERP Application unit within DOIT is responsible for converting the file to an Oracle upload file, so that the AP section can post the transactions.

Pcard holders who have unauthorized use or violate the pcard policy receive a warning for their first and second violation, regardless of the type or magnitude of the violation. After the third violation, the cardholder loses their pcard privileges. Violations are tracked on a rolling twelve-month period.

The Purchasing Card Administrator sends a number of monthly email reminders to pcard program participants. Email reminders may be for the necessary elements of successful monthly reconciliation, reminders about ensuring the use of the County's tax exemption, or when and how to use the Special Request Form.

Currently, the Pcard Administrator does not have the capacity to review for themes or trends in Special Requests Form, for potential use of pcards for recurring charges, outliers or issues to focus on for future training or policy changes. These are common reviews for risk and fraud mitigation.

Debt Administration

Currently, the Treasurer and Senior Financial Officer are responsible for debt administration, in coordination with the CFO and COO. DeKalb County has a number of loans and bonds, predominantly used for building renovation, watershed management, and stormwater. The County uses Arcadis to assist in building debt modeling. The County leverages a number of loan and bond strategies to ensure obtaining the best available rate. The County utilizes loans from the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority, U.S. Environment Protection Agency, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for advantageous rates.

The County's ability to issue bonds at competitive interest rates to fund projects is based on part on the credit rating the County maintains. To assess the County's creditworthiness and financial management, the Treasurer prepares presentations for rating agencies. The Treasurer works with a third-party financial advisory and outside counsel to prepare for these meetings. The Treasurer also has signature authority to make bond and loan-related payments.

Investment Management

Currently the County's investment strategy is low-risk or no-risk, investing only in Georgia Fund 1, the State Treasury's investment pool for state, local, and education agencies. Georgia Fund 1 is considered a conservative investment strategy. As the County does not currently have an investment portfolio outside of Georgia Fund 1, there is no overall investment policy or formal investment strategy.

Because there are no staff-level employees involved in investment management, and because the County has limited investments, both the Treasurer and Senior Financial Officer operate more tactically than strategically.

Grants and Capital Strategy

The County does not have a comprehensive County-wide grants prioritization or strategic evaluation, nor any formal evaluation process to ensure that the grant award and post-award maintenance of effort requirements are appropriate for use of County funds. Division staff may identify opportunities, or meet with end-user departments to discuss possible opportunities, and provide informal recommendations or guidance to end-user departments, but have limited authority over decision-making around applying. End-user departments share grant application responsibilities with the Capital and Grants Division.

Once the County has a notice of intent to award from the awarding agency, information goes to the COO and then to the BOC for acceptance of the award. This intent to award may come from the awarding agency to the end-user department, who may not realize that the Capital and Grants Division should also be notified. Capital and Grants Division staff often review the BOC agendas to identify potential awards on the agenda for discussion, and then watch the meetings to see if an award is accepted.

Once accepted, the Capital and Grants Division creates a cost center for tracking grant-related expenses and revenues. The Division also establishes all funds for capital programs, bonds, loans, and for SPLOST as well. End-user departments receive a POETA document, so named for the additional ERP project module string of funding identifiers:

- Project Number
- Organization
- Expenditure Type
- Task
- Award

The POETA document provides the necessary financial information to allow the end-user department to correctly code requisitions and record revenues in CV360. If the award includes new positions, information is also forwarded to DOIT and HR about new position funding source.

For grants, the Capital and Grants Division is responsible for tracking all spending, approving all requisitions, and, depending on the end-user department and the grant, preparing financial status reports and other required grants reporting. Most of the County's awards are reimbursement-based, so the County must "draw down" funds from the awarding agency to reimburse the County for the expenditures. For most federal awards, the County is using clearing accounts to keep track of all expenses and allocations, to help ensure the County has received complete reimbursement. WorkSource DeKalb, the County's workforce development department, has its own clearing account, given the count and dollar value of the regularly awarded funds.

Requests for drawdown of grant funds vary from Division responsibility to end-user responsibility, depending on the grant and the end-user department. This bifurcated responsibility can cause issues with timing of the request and when the Division is aware of the request. Within Capital and Grants Division, drawdown responsibilities are often shared between the grant's assigned staff and a Senior Accountant. Staff in a number of different titles are responsible for grants management and drawdown-related responsibilities. Nearly all drawdowns, financial reports or other submissions are typically reviewed by the Budget and Management Coordinator and the Assistant Director.

For financial reporting, such as monthly or quarterly financial status reports, Capital and Grants Division prepares and submits the financial report, sometimes with involvement from the department in preparation and review. Capital and Grants Division staff regularly communicate with end-user grant liaisons, but there are no formal grant meetings or templates used to discuss expenditure tracking, budget-to-actuals, review of activity performed compared to period of performance, or other proactive grant tracking elements common in leading grant management practices.

There is also a Budget and Grants Analyst assigned to support all CIP projects, with a Grant Coordinator assigned to SPLOST project support. For SPLOST drawdowns, the Division coordinates with Treasury using expenditure reports to support the transfer of funds. For other capital projects, the approved budget contains a schedule defining the process and timeline for accessing the funds.

The Division uses CV360 but utilizes a project management module instead of a grants management module, and the County does not maintain a separate grants management system that could interface with CV360. DeKalb County's grants are primarily operated on a cash basis, while the County's accounting is on a modified accrual basis, which can cause timing and expense and revenue treatment issues.

The Division is currently responsible for subrecipient financial compliance monitoring, as well as preparing the Schedule of Expenditure of Federal Awards ("SEFA") and preparing for and responding to the Single Audit, which is required for all organizations that receive more than \$1,000,000 in federal funds. The County's Single Audit, in recent years, has noted issues related to significant adjustments being made to the SEFA to ensure accuracy, as the initially prepared document contained a number of errors.

The Division performs monthly and annual period closing for all of the funds under their responsibility. For year-end, this includes tracking and managing accruals manually for multi-year grants, as the project module that the Division uses reportedly does not track accruals adequately. This process requires collaboration with the General Ledger Section and the Accounts Payable section.

Compliance

The Compliance Division predominantly does financial preparation, compilations, and reviews in preparation for the annual financial audit process. Some processes, such as reviews of custodial accounts, the courts, the tax commissioner, and the Police Department's property room, occur regularly each year on a fairly standardized schedule. These reviews are guided by the Government Accountability Office's Yellow Book governmental auditing standards. Staff report that the Division used to be called upon by end-user departments to assist with additional efficiency reviews or fraud risk reviews, but those requests are currently fairly minimal.

Cash Forecasting and Revenue Management

The Banking and Revenue section is responsible for approximately 78 bank accounts across five banks. The Revenue Manager, in the absence of the Senior Accountant position, is responsible for opening, closing, and managing access to these bank accounts. The Revenue Manager is also responsible for ensuring merchant processing procedures are in place and that received funds are being recorded into the County's bank accounts. The Banking and Revenue team is also responsible for supporting reconciliation of special cash accounts monthly, such as the SPLOST, Local Victims Assistance, and State Confiscated Funds accounts. The Banking and Revenue team's most time-consuming responsibility is ensuring that all funds received are supported by AR transactions, and tracking and working to resolve the unapplied cash that may not have been supported by an AR transaction. End-user departments are responsible for entries to account for their recorded revenue. These entries must be matched with the received revenue to ensure a match between requested/anticipated revenue and received revenue. Often times funds are received into the County's bank accounts that are not matched with an end-user entry, which creates unapplied cash. The Banking and Revenue team has to work with other divisions in Finance, as well as end-user departments, to identify and resolve these discrepancies.

A number of departments have agreements with merchant service processors to receive County payments. The Revenue Manager is involved in system migration and implementation, to help ensure that the appropriate relationships are established and that the departments and their applications have adequate information to process online or real-time credit card payments and that these payments are recorded in the correct County bank accounts.

The Revenue Manager is responsible for cash needs forecasting for the County, to help ensure that account balances are adequate for immediate cash needs. Projections are typically completed twice a month. Annually, the County utilizes a Tax Anticipation Note (“TAN”) loan to help fund government operations before property tax payments are received. OMB does limited analytical budget forecasting, so the Treasurer and Revenue Manager build a projected six month income statement to understand what cash may be needed, and to determine how much to borrow in the TAN. The development of these forecasts and projections are largely reliant on institutional knowledge.

The Revenue Manager is also responsible for overseeing the County’s escheatment process, by which the County remits uncollected payments to the State for tracking and disbursal.

All wire payments go through the Banking and Revenue section. End-user departments submit requests for wire payments via a secure email service to the Fiscal Assistant. The Fiscal Assistant enters the requested wire payment in the appropriate bank account’s wire transfer portal. Currently the Revenue Manager must approve the request, since the Senior Accountant position is vacant. Once the payment has been made, confirmation details are transferred to AP to make the associated CV360 AP entry.

Within the AR section, the AR Supervisor is responsible for processing check and cash payments the County receives. Details for some deposits and payments are received in a general email inbox, which is the responsibility of one of the three Accounting Technicians to review the inbox and, based on provided information, make CV360 AR entries as appropriate. Other departments may send AR “invoices” for entry into CV360, or information from the County’s payment processing applications with payment detail. The AR team is also responsible for bank account reconciliation.

The Courier goes to assigned departments across the County to pick up payments physically received. Each department is required to have a preparer and a verifier for the received funds. All funds are transported in locked cash bags, and the Courier has no key or other means to open the bags. Accounting Technicians are responsible for recounting the check and credit card receipts and verifying the end-user department’s system entry is complete and accurate. For credit card payments, the Accounting Technicians use the settlement statements. For cash receipts, a secured courier picks up the cash from the AR section and delivers to the bank. The receiving bank is responsible for verifying the count reported by the end-user department. The end-user department prepares deposit slips that the Accounting Technicians use to create the AR cash receipt in CV360.

In August of 2023, the Office of the Independent Internal Auditor (“IIA”) conducted an audit of Revenue Collections and Deposits Processes in Finance, and noted several findings related to written policies, segregation of duties, and safeguarding and custody of revenue. The AR section has been implementing corrective actions, and hopes to have IIA verify the completeness and adequacy of their efforts later this year.

Payroll and Pension Support

Payroll is responsible for all active and pension employee payroll, as well as processing elected official payroll, summer youth program payrolls and special payrolls for election season poll workers. Many governments have transitioned to using temporary agencies for summer program and elections-related payrolls. For the active employee population, which is approximately 6700 employees, payroll is processed biweekly; 100% of employees receive their pay via direct deposit. The Payroll section is also responsible for ensuring all garnishments, benefits, voluntary deductions are all processed and remitted to the appropriate organization.

Currently, CV360 does not allow for on-demand payroll “checks” to review for changes in benefits, deductions, pay rates, or other major payroll changes. Payroll must run a full payroll check report to preview these changes and ensure their accuracy.

Currently, CV360 does not offer any test paycheck functionality that would allow employees to forecast how changes to benefits, withholdings, or other pay-related changes would impact the employee’s net paycheck. Employees in the County anecdotally reported hesitation in making changes to benefits or withholdings, for fear that the resulting net paycheck would not be adequate to cover their bills and expenses.

The County currently has approximately 5,500 individuals receiving pension payments. When the County transitioned to CV360 for HRIS functions in 2022, the County also transitioned to a new pension administration system, ISSI. CV360 is where the active population’s pension contributions and eligibility are tracked. Information about active population contributions is also reported from CV360 into ISSI, to track active employee’s eligible contributions.

Each employee who is scheduled to retire must meet with the Pension Administrator, who manually calculates the employee’s determination of benefits and final calculation of monthly payouts. If a current DeKalb County employee wants a projection of what their retirement benefit may be, they must contact the Pension Administrator to run a projection, instead of using a self-service tool.

Staff report that the pension population typically requires more customer service focus, answering questions about eligibility, tax forms, beneficiary forms, forecasted payouts, and other questions and concerns, as well as providing more technical support and assistance.

Pension payroll runs monthly, and includes the monthly payments to pensioners, as well as lump sum payouts for individuals who leave County employment before fully vesting and beneficiary benefits after the passing of an employee, as eligible.

The Pension Administrators and the Deputy Director over Risk Management also staff the Pension Board. The Pension Board is responsible for the investment strategy for the pension funds. The Pension Board is established in compliance with state law, and has nine members. There are seven voting members: the County CEO, two members elected by the Board of Commissioners, two members representing the active plan participants, one member representing the retired plan participants, and one member appointed by the other six voting members. The two non-voting members are the County CFO and the Director of Human Resources. The Pension Board members representing the active and retired employees are voted on by the population they will be representing.

The Pension Board oversees the investment strategy for pension funds, and also authorizes withdrawals from the investment accounts to fund pension needs, specifying the amounts and how to allocate that withdrawal from available accounts. The Division also uses an actuarial firm for budget development and ensuring compliance with the State's requirements for pension contributions.

Staff noted challenges with the transition to ISSI, and some current limitations on reports that can be produced from the system, such as the pension valuation data.

Benefits Administration

The Benefits Administration section prioritizes timely, friendly, and accessible information about benefits made available to employees and retirees. The Benefits Administration section manages open enrollment for both active and retired employee populations. Each population has an assigned Senior Specialist and an assigned Specialist, to assist with cross-training and succession planning. The Health Advocate is assigned to assist the CEO, Board of Commissioners, and their staffs with benefits, in addition to assisting with communication with carriers, assisting with claims management, and helping with broader benefits administration, including ensuring that staff who are on unpaid leave are being invoiced for continued benefit enrollment, as applicable.

The County's benefit systems (CV360 for active employees and Selerix for the retirees) are self-service. Employees and retirees can, during their open enrollment period, log in to select their new or continuing benefits. Benefits Administration staff also participate in health care fairs, open enrollment fairs, and other events to ensure awareness of upcoming changes or open enrollment periods. Staff also offer onsite enrollment support for large departments where staff may not have regular access to computers as a part of their job duties, such as Roads & Drainage, Sanitation, and Watershed Management. Benefits Administration staff are regularly running reports during and after open enrollment to ensure that the selected enrollments are appropriately transferred to the carrier and that the correct withholdings are being deducted. Staff report that there have been no errors in enrollments during the last two years.

For life events that may occur outside of the open enrollment period, employees and retirees must contact the Benefits Administration section to generate the life event in CV360 and allow for enrollment. A Specialist or Senior Specialist then communicates with the employee about required documentation, deadline for completion, and other information about how life events will impact benefit coverage and deductions.

Changes to the benefit rates charged to employees are presented to and authorized by the Employee Relations and Public Safety Committee of the Board of Commissioners.

Risk Management

Risk Management and Workers' Compensation both feel that the County's demonstrated efforts in safety, risk reduction, and support after an accident help convey that the County values and respects its employees, so both units focus on strong support and customer service as the foundation of their service delivery model.

Risk Management efforts are often collaborative between the Workers' Compensation Section and the Risk Management Section. The County uses Origami as its claims management system, and utilizes a third-party subrogation firm for claims collection. For Worker's Compensation, the County is self-insured and the program is self-administered, processing approximately 1000 claims a year.

Worker's Compensation Responsibilities:

The Worker's Compensation Section has three traditional adjusters. The fourth is medical only (known as "MO") and only processes medical claims without any associated loss of work time. For any injury sustained on the job, the employee should report their injury to their supervisor. Supervisors are responsible for reporting the injury in Origami, collecting any additional information about the injury, the environment, and the general working conditions and uploading that information to Origami as well. Supervisors provide the injured employee information about the panel of physicians eligible to assess and treat on the job injuries. Supervisors also have "first fill" cards, which is a temporary prescription card that allows injured workers to receive the initial prescription of medications related to their injury without any out-of-pocket costs. An Adjuster is assigned to the case, based on the department of the injured worker. The Adjuster coordinates with the injured worker, and the department, to help ensure that the injured worker's needs are met, and that the County is collecting adequate information to assess and make determinations about the claim. As applicable, the Adjuster will liaise with attorneys on the case. Regular adjusters process approximately 100 – 120 cases annually, with the MO adjuster handling between 600 and 700 cases.

When payments are made to injured workers, information is entered into Origami, which communicates with CV360 for timely AP issuance of the payment.

Risk Management Responsibilities

Within the last year, the Risk Management section adopted the Environmental Health Safety ("EHS") system, a framework designed to assist in proactively managing and mitigating risks related to occupational health, safety, and environmental impact. Within Origami, there is an EHS portal that captures documentation of inspections, meetings, building and department safety and security plans, and any accident review board/safety committee activity. Currently, there is not a County-wide Accident Review Board or Safety Committee; the County's prior committee stopped meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic and has not been brought back. Several end-user departments have internal review functions and committees. Any results from departmental review meetings are uploaded into the EHS portal to ensure broader visibility. The Risk Management Section hopes to leverage EHS data collection to assist in development of a more complete and insightful risk matrix that will allow for more proactive and intentional intervention and education efforts.

For motor vehicle accidents and other accident claims, the Risk Management section is responsible for coordinating with the end-user department and the Department of Law for submitting claims to the brokers and ensuring that claims processing isn't waiting on additional information from the County.

Currently, due to staffing limitations, the Risk Management sections' safety program is primarily focused on defensive driving, and first aid/life safety training. The Risk Control Officers are also working to ensure that all departments have safety plans and protocols in place. One of the Risk Control Officers is working to develop a Safety Evaluation Plan for the County's buildings on Sams Street. The section is also currently performing inspections of the playgrounds in the County's parks, and participates in insurance company inspection walk-thrus. Sanitation's Top Gun program (which rewards the lot with the least preventable accidents) is viewed as a leading practice that should be replicated throughout the County.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

Several IIA reports over the previous few years have noted issues related to Finance Department policies and procedures. One internal audit report noted a lack of end-user department awareness of, and adherence to, Finance Department processes and procedures. In other reports, there were deficiencies noted in Finance Department documented procedures for certain functions.

There have been efforts to remedy these findings and areas of concern, but these efforts have been somewhat siloed to the responsible division and not part of an overall effort to create comprehensive policies, processes, or manuals for employees or end-users who may have multiple roles and responsibilities. Within the Department, there are employees who may understand their role, but fail to understand how their role fits into a larger process, especially if the process crosses sections or divisions.

M&J reviewed a number of provided policies and procedures manuals. Some of the documents, such as the Capital Assets Manual dated September 2024, and the County Travel Policy dated March 2024, were detailed and comprehensive – complete manuals and single sources for division employees and end-users alike. Others were for single policy or processes, and many lacked initial adoption dates, last revision dates, or last review dates. Several still referenced FMIS Oracle step-by-step instructions, or had either document titles or in-policy reference dates from before 2020.

The Capital and Grants Division provided a fairly detailed step-by-step manual for internal staff use, although it still includes screenshots from the former financial system. The Capital and Grants Division also has a number of guiding documents provided by awarding agencies, detailing reporting expectations and other tracking requirements. The Capital and Grants Division lacks an end-user focused grants management guide creating standards and consistent expectations for end-user departments. Given the multi-year repeat Single Audit findings that appear to be related, at least in part, due to issues in coordination and communication between the Capital and Grants Division and both end-user departments and other divisions within the Finance Department, division-level operating guidance may not be adequate.

The transition to CV360 and ISSI for payroll and pension administration resulted in an update in processes and steps, as well as addition of roles that were previously the responsibility of other divisions. The Payroll Section has developed what is anecdotally known as the “run book” which documents all of the processes and steps necessary for processing each type of active employee payroll, and the position responsible for completing each step. A similar run book is in development for pension-related payroll processes. Payroll also has a desk manual that has a description and PowerPoint documenting all staff tasks. In addition to internal operating guides, Payroll provides quarterly training for the departmental payroll coordinators, and has also developed a number of tutorials, videos, and other resources available in the CV360 training hub on the County’s intranet.

The Benefits Administration Section hosts a benefits microsite for active and retired employee populations, containing benefits guides, summary plan descriptions and other information about DeKalb County’s carriers. For internal staff, the Manager has created training materials that explain which programs are self-insured and fully insured, and information about the different plans the County offers. The Manager is developing additional training material specific to CV360 system workflows and processes.

The Worker’s Compensation section has a process manual for supervisors and injured workers. Employees leverage the Georgia Workers’ Compensation Association desk manual, which outlines procedures and requirements for program administration.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

The Finance Department reports tracking a number of data points in Visuant, the County’s performance tracking platform. M&J requested copies of Visuant data reporting, but did not receive the information during the fieldwork period.

The AP section utilizes reporting available within CV360 to review volume and processing daily monthly including invoice processing, travel processing and the invoice on-hold report. In interviews, the AP section’s stated goal is to try and process all invoices within two business days of their section’s receipt, but Division leadership is not aware of any means to track against this goal currently. The manual nature of invoice processing in CV360 may also impact the feasibility of this goal within the current system and process.

Within Risk Management, the emphasis is typically on compliance, which can be challenging for creating KPIs, as increased compliance results in reduced incidents and claims. The Division is tracking year-over-year loss history and number of accidents, but those may not help tell the story of improved awareness and reduction in accidents and claims. Annually, the Risk Management Section reviews the prior year's themes and trends in workers compensation claims, to determine if additional education or awareness would help mitigate future incidents. This information may be shared with the Health and Wellness Coordinator, to provide additional information in upcoming newsletters. Workers' Compensation also tracks a number of data points:

- Total number of claims by department
- Claims by type (MO, lost time, etc.)
- Total lost time calculated
- Auto accidents
- Physical body location of injury

The Capital and Grants Division maintains some internal tracking of grants activity and provided the following metrics:

- Single Audit (audited value)
- Grant Process Time
- Reimbursement Rate
- Federal Reports (submitted)
- Number of funds managed
- Number of cost centers managed
- SPLOST (value)
- Enterprise Capital Fund (value)
- Capital CIP (value)
- Capital Bond (value)

The Capital and Grants Division also tracks other interim metrics for funds/grants, such as spend rates, drawdown requests.

Payroll aims to reduce the number of off-cycle requests, which are time-consuming and represent an issue with the information uploaded and approved for the standard payroll cycles.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

Many employees are frustrated and demoralized, in part because of CV360 and their perception that it has made their workload more complicated and, in some instances, more manual. Many staff feel that they are working hard to keep up with workload and continue to deliver good customer service, but changes from FMIS to CV360 have made their processing times longer, may require them to change their operating practices, and increase the inter-dependencies on end-user departments or internal Finance divisions. Staff across many divisions expressed concern about the lack of preliminary engagement, and inadequate input on requirements and business workflows, which has resulted in a system that requires more inputs, more screens, and more time to achieve the same results. The issues and frustrations with CV360 have resulted in low morale and the feeling that things are persistently behind. Staff feel as if they are "building the plane while they are flying it".

For a number of positions, the County has historically leveraged promotion from within. Internal promotions can provide growth opportunities for staff, but may result in employees who can functionally perform the duties of the job, but lack the strategic thinking and critical analysis skills, as well as deeper understanding of key concepts such as GAAP and GASB and other accounting industry standards, and may not have fully developed the managerial skill sets needed to succeed in supervisory and managerial roles.

There is a prevalent concern that Finance is the “dumping ground” where roles with no obvious home end up. This concern about being assigned additional tasks and increased workload has means staff may be more hesitant to go above and beyond, or help out, in fear that the work may become a permanent part of their role moving forward. It also results in frustrations, as some of these additional duties take priorities over their regularly assigned duties, which creates competing priorities for their time and challenges in getting everything done in a timely manner. The CFO tends to operate in a more high-level managerial style, so staff don’t feel that the CFO is aware of the workload or the additional tasks.

Staff believe that communications within the Department is reactive, which may be exacerbated by the number of issues with CV360 that must be addressed, and may take time to address. Staff also note that varying work-from-home schedules, and limited understanding of when others may or may not be in the office, exacerbate the feeling of siloed divisions. There are also limited deliberate, intentional communications between divisions, outside of that necessary to complete core job functions. Divisions may not understand how changes they make to their processes and practices may have impacts on other division’s operations or reporting functions.

[Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition](#)

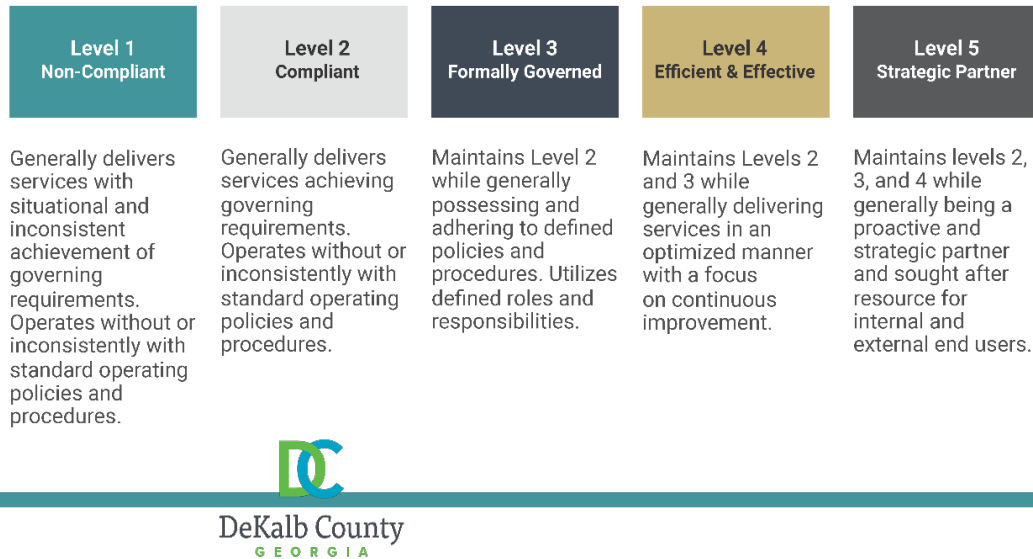
The Department’s Workers’ Compensation Manager sits on the State Board of Workers’ Compensation Advisory Council.

The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (“GFOA”) has awarded DeKalb County the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 48 consecutive years.

[Departmental Maturity Assessment](#)

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department’s maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.

Maturity Model



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 2: Compliant.

What is largely prohibiting the Department from moving to a strategic, collaborative, and effective Department is the lack of foundational components needed to build a more strategic and effective Department. In addition to confusion and frustration around CV360, inconsistencies in the presence of formal, more comprehensive processes and procedures has created a culture of reliance on institutional knowledge in many divisions. When that institutional knowledge isn't present, there may be inconsistencies in the processes followed, or missed opportunities to perform procedures in more effective ways. The lack of standardized processes and procedures also creates frustration when working with end-user departments and makes it challenging to request that end-user departments follow standards in submitting requisitions, grants information, or other requests, especially if conflicting guidance has been provided.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1a: The job titles used in the Department do not always accurately reflect the role that an employee is assigned. Managers and division leads reported limited titles available for them to assign, and some divisions have started using internal "working titles" instead of the assigned title, and others have reported the need to modify the job description before posting open jobs, to try and help ensure that qualified individuals will be interested and apply.

Observation 1b: Management reports challenges in obtaining qualified applicants and in having them accept offers, reportedly due to non-competitive salaries for the work being performed.

Recommendation 1: The County should work with the selected vendor for the Classification and Compensation Study to consider benchmarking accountants, technicians, and other roles against comparable private sector positions. Additional attention should be paid to job titles, and the County may need to consider either tailoring the titles, or creating job descriptions for individual divisions, rather than trying to use a broad-based job description for a position that may differ based on the hiring division or department. This broadened benchmarking will provide the County with additional market industry, and may allow Finance to enhance its marketing to and targeting of workers, as well as consider compensation and incentive structures more competitive with the broader market for these employees.

Observation 2: M&J did not evaluate the Utility Customer Operations Division of Finance within the scope of this assessment.

Recommendation 2: The County should assess Utility Customer Operations and the Department of Watershed Management in an upcoming operational assessment, to better understand the roles of the employees within the two departments, including the dependencies, handoffs, and organizational and governance structure.

Observation 3: The Finance Department has a number of staff in key positions that are either nearing retirement or already eligible for retirement. Additionally, there are a few staff and/or contractors in the Department that have previously retired, and have returned to perform key departmental duties.

Recommendation 3: The Finance Department needs to work with HR on formal succession planning procedures, including documenting key functions and tasks, developing updated job descriptions, etc. and considering whether more targeted recruitments or executive search functions will be necessary to identify qualified candidates.

Observation 4: After the transition to CV360, end-user owners within Finance are now responsible for what may be considered Tier 1 help desk support for an end-user question about certain CV360 financial modules. The addition of these support duties is creating a strain on many employees, as it is an additional duty beyond their already full workload, and may require knowledge or understanding of the CV360 system that the Department staff do not possess.

Recommendation 4: The Department should create several business analyst-type positions to assist with resolving CV360 issues, as well as working with other users within Finance to identify potential issues, and serve as a liaison between Finance and DOIT in identifying potential workflow changes, processing updates, or modifying user roles or permissions. Staff in these roles should have both financial and/or accounting experience as well as programming or development skills.

Observation 5: The August 2024 transition to CV360 is still being evaluated for impacts, workflows, and potential issues within the production environment. Numerous employees, both in Finance and in end-user departments, have expressed concerns and frustration about how CV360 is currently operating.

Recommendation 5a: Finance may need to work with DOIT to better understand the current capabilities or limitations of CV360. Additional change management support, group live training, and opportunities for end-users to utilize the test and/or train environments, and/or additional resource development may be necessary to assist end-users in becoming comfortable and informed about how to best utilize CV360.

DOIT and Finance may also need to consider a post-implementation assessment and/or fit-gap analysis, if not already planned for approximately one year after initial “go live”.

Recommendation 5b: Finance should identify an internal champion who is familiar with the issues in CV360 and can liaise with DOIT and the third-party consultants to document the current issues, and support identifying viable options to move forward, including assisting in end-user testing. Specifically, Finance and DOIT should work to address the issues with batch uploads, the inability to copy and paste duplicative elements of invoice entry, and issues with the punch-out system orders failing to provide adequate detail to process invoices within accounting policies.

Finance and DOIT should also determine if CV360 offers optical character recognition (“OCR”) technology, which would allow the system to convert information from scanned invoices directly into text within the AP entry module.

Observation 6: The AP section reports delays in their ability to process wire payments due to lack of end-user department financial system account information needed to post the payment.

Recommendation 6: The AP section should work with the Treasury Division to update the form that end-users must submit to request wire payments. The updated form should require requesting departments to include account information before the wire payment is transferred. The request form should be provided to AP, along with the wire transfer confirmation, to allow for timely and accurate posting of the expense.

Observation 7: Currently, the AP section physically prints, stamps the receipt date, and files a paper copy all invoices received and processed. This is redundant to system storage of the invoice.

Recommendation 7: The AP section should end its practice of physically printing, stamping and filing paper invoices. The AP section should ensure that all printed invoices are stored in the electronic payment file, and then discard the duplicative paper record.

Observation 8: The purchasing card (“Pcard”) function is currently assigned to a single employee, the Pcard Administrator. The workload does not allow the Pcard Administrator to focus on strategic analysis of pcard use, instead focusing on operational processing and management.

Additionally, purchasing card functions are typically housed within Purchasing to ensure end-users aren’t failing to utilize contracts for expenditures, and to ensure that pcards are not being used to avoid purchasing policies. Currently this role is in Finance and the Purchasing and Contracting Department does not regularly review or analyze pcard activity.

Recommendation 8: The County should consider moving the Pcard Administrator role into the Purchasing and Contracting Department. If the County chooses not to make organizational changes, it should introduce processes for Purchasing to regularly review pcard activity for compliance with existing contracts, the County’s purchasing policy, and assess for potential activity that may indicate the need for a contract or agreement.

Observation 9: The form that end-users complete to request new or updated pcard access is currently paper-based, and the paper form must be routed to the CFO and, for some types of requests, to the COO for approval.

Recommendation 9: The Pcard administrator should work with DOIT to create an online fillable form. It may make sense to have this form tie into Active Directory or CV360 for verification of departmental affiliation and other identifying information. These forms should be submitted and routed electronically, with all forms stored electronically once all approvals are obtained.

Observation 10: Currently pcard end-user roles must receive training before accessing the pcard or pcard-associated roles. The current process does not require end-users to pass a test or otherwise demonstrate their competency or mastery of program requirements.

Additionally, Finance does not require employees in pcard end-user roles to complete refresher training annually, and there is limited on-demand access to the training materials.

Recommendation 10: The Pcard Administrator should work to create on-demand versions of training materials, checklists, and reminders through the InDeKalb site.

For the initial training, end-users should be required to pass a test to demonstrate mastery of the material, before being given permissions related to pcard use.

The Pcard administrator should create a self-led annual refresher training and subsequent testing, with all users required to take the training and pass the test at least once annually.

Observation 11: The current system for tracking and penalizing pcard violations treats all violations equally, with three violations resulting in loss of pcard privileges. Leading practices encourage the development of tiered violations, or assigning points to violations.

Recommendation 11: The County should introduce a tiered or points-based system violations system, where lower-risk or lower-impact violations (e.g. first loss of receipt, lack of timely reconciliation) are assigned a lower tier or lower points than a more serious infractions (e.g. personal use of card). Penalties should be assessed based on accumulation of a certain number of points, where lower point accumulations may result in additional required trainings, lower pcard credit levels, increased reconciliations, and more significant violations can result in immediate suspension of privileges.

Observation 12: Currently, the County only invests funds into Georgia Fund 1. While Georgia Fund 1 typically provides strong returns, and the County currently has limited cash available for investments, the County should consider an investment policy that could capitalize on available cash.

Recommendation 12: The County and the Department should assess the viability of an Investment Policy that includes short-term Treasury Notes and money market accounts. The policy should clearly define procedures for evaluating available cash, and setting restrictions to only consider investments once immediate cash and liquidity needs have been met.

Observation 13: The County does not have a County-wide strategic grants process, allowing each end-user department to determine what grants may suit the needs of that department. This has resulted in a fragmented grants strategy, and creates a more reactive Capital and Grants Division. This may result in inefficient use of time or funding in pursuing grants that don't align with the County's overall strategic mission and priorities, and could result in the County being required to fund maintenance of efforts in future periods.

Recommendation 13: The County should develop a comprehensive grants strategy, including criteria for objectively evaluating the value a grant may provide to the County or its citizens, the estimated cost of grants implementation and any post-grant maintenance of effort or additional costs.

The evaluation should also consider whether it may be more impactful for the County to leverage County funds to support programs that could be supported with grant funds. Utilizing County funds instead of time-limited or scope-limited grant funds could expand the potential impact and reduce compliance concerns with terms and conditions associated with grant funding.

The County should also consider a Grants Strategy position in the CEO and or COO's office, to assist in overseeing an enterprise-wide strategy and helping determine which opportunities are best suited for the County and which may be a better fit for community partners who can apply for grants with the County's support.

Observation 14a: Grants and Capital Division functions are decentralized, with the Division performing some functions and end-user departments performing others. This decentralization is inconsistent, with different departments (and grants) with varying levels of authority and ownership.

Observation 14b: The Grants and Capital Division has not developed consistent grants management manuals that provide end-user guidance and expectations. Additionally, there are not formal, regular meetings or checkpoints between the Grants and Capital Division assigned staff and the end-user grants liaison. This has resulted in misunderstanding about process workflow, timing, and grant closeout and period of performance management toward the end of a grant period.

Recommendation 14a: The County should consider a more comprehensive shared services model for grants management, centralizing all grants accounting and financial functions, including all drawdowns and reporting, into the Finance Department. Should consider centralizing all grants financial activities.

If the County does not want to centralize the grants function, the Capital and Grants Division needs to develop a comprehensive grants management manual that provides instructions and process guides for end-user departments. The Capital and Grants Division should also introduce quarterly grants management meetings that review expenditures to date, program activities performed and planned, and review of upcoming expenses. For the last quarter of a grant period, these meetings should be occurring monthly to ensure that all funds are being spent appropriately, while ensuring there is reduced risk of overspend that would require County general funds to support grant activities.

Recommendation 14b: As several end-user departments also have staff serving in accountant or accounting-type roles, there may also be challenges in the decentralization or inconsistent treatment of financial and accounting functions. The County may need to assess centralizing all of its accounting function in the future as well. To do this, a shared services assessment would be beneficial to capture all disparate financial activities, understand the current processes and workflows, and help provide recommendations and a roadmap for centralization of service delivery.

Observation 15: The Compliance Division is predominantly performing compilations and financial reviews, and is no longer performing internal audit type work.

Recommendation 15: The Compliance Division should be reorganized under either the Controller or the Assistant Director over Administration, and could be leveraged to assist with documenting current business processes and assisting with business process improvement and dissemination of revised and enhanced business processes.

Observation 16: Expenditure or cash needs forecasting is completed by the Treasurer and Revenue Manager and is heavily reliant on institutional knowledge.

Recommendation 16: The Treasurer and Revenue Manager should create templates, instructions, and descriptions of any assumptions in a memorialized manner so that the process for projecting cash needs can be replicated in additional years if needed. The Treasurer and Revenue Manager should also create a succession plan and training plan for this function as it is critical for the County's maintenance of proper cash flow.

Observation 17: Currently, County staff are responsible for processing special payrolls for summer youth program participants and seasonal poll workers. These payrolls are typically processed off-cycle, more frequently than active County employee payroll, and often represent significantly increased volume. Leading practice is for these payroll duties to be performed by a temporary agency

Recommendation 17: The County should contract with a temporary agency for the hiring and payroll processes for special temporary workers such as summer youth program participants and seasonal poll workers.

Observation 18: Currently, there is not an active County-wide Safety Committee or Accident Review Board. The previous County-wide committee stopped meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendation 18: The Risk Control Manager should reconvene the County-wide Safety Committee.

Observation 19: Guiding documentation within the Department is fragmented and inconsistent, with certain policies, processes, and procedures captured within comprehensive manuals, with others existing as stand-alone documentation. There is no inventory or catalog of all available and disseminated guidance, and there is no consistent tracking of date of issuance, review, or revision, or any other change log to better understand what may have been in place during a previous period that may be under monitoring or audit.

Recommendation 19: The Department should inventory existing policies, processes, procedures, and other guidance documentation to understand what currently exists, and perform a gap analysis against leading practice. Documents that have not been reviewed or updated within the last two years should be reviewed and revised, as applicable. The CFO should appoint someone responsible for tracking change logs of changed policies and processes, and all guiding documentation should clearly identify the last reviewed and revision dates.

Observation 20: The Assistant Director of Administration position is under-utilized, currently performing functions and job duties more commonly performed by an Office Manager or a higher-level Management Analyst.

Recommendation 20: There are a number of recommendations within this assessment that would benefit from having a dedicated project champion to assist with requirements and documentation gathering. This may be a suitable short-term role for the Assistant Director of Administration. The Assistant Director of Administration could also serve in a business process improvement capacity, helping to implement recommendations County leadership selects for implementation within Finance.

Conclusion

The Finance Department has undergone significant change over the last year with the introduction of CV360. This has caused significant changes in workflow, processes, and comfort within job functions. Staff are working hard to continue to provide quality customer service while adjusting to new user experience and processes. The County and Department should continue to ensure that strong change management procedures and DOIT support are available to maximize efficiencies available in the system and make adjustments that improve effectiveness. There are a number of opportunities to update processes, create automation in workflows, and improve processing timelines.

The County and Department will need to collaborate on decision-making on how to most effectively position the Capital and Grants function for success and more strategic collaboration.

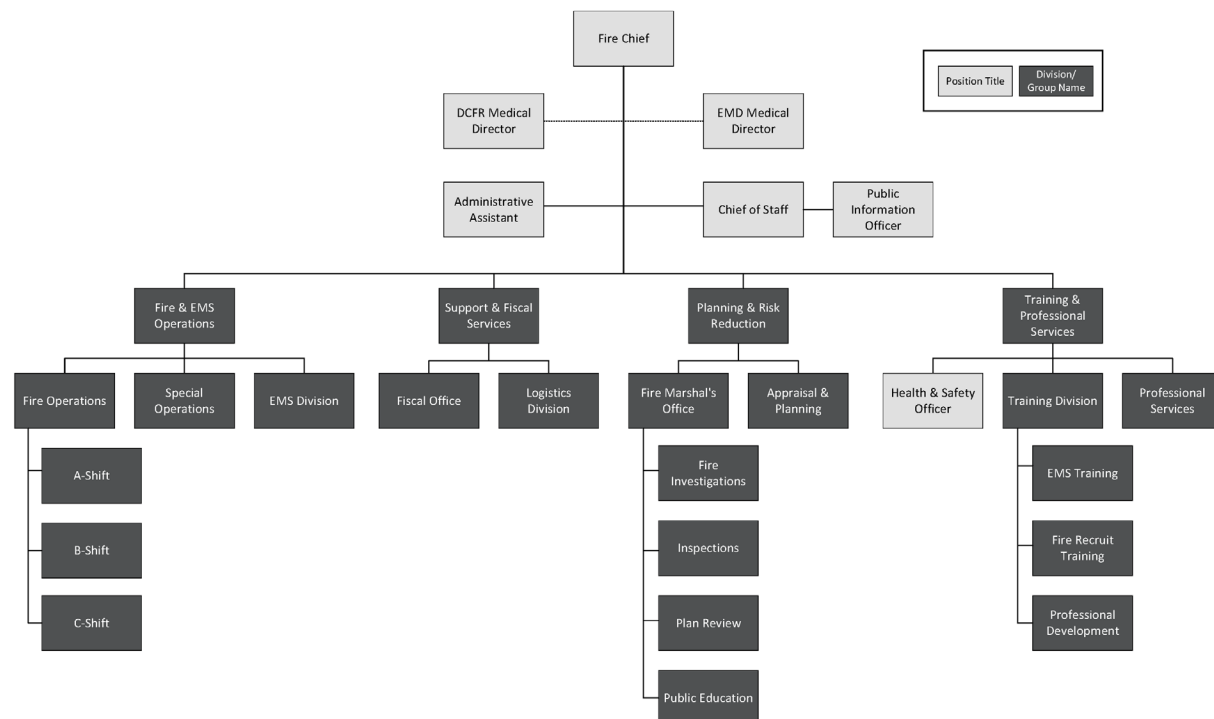
We are confident that a renewed focus on change management support, as well as the recommendations contained in this report, will assist the Finance Department in becoming a more effective and collaborative organization, both between internal functions as well as its customers and stakeholders. We would like to thank the CFO and other Department for their time and resources, and for assisting us in conducting interviews with 22 staff across levels of the Department.

3.H Fire Rescue

Introduction

DeKalb County Fire Rescue (“DCFR” or “Department”) provides fire suppression, technical rescue, fire inspection, and fire prevention services to unincorporated DeKalb County and a selection of local municipalities, as well as emergency medical services (“EMS”) to the entirety of Dekalb County.¹¹

Organization



¹¹ According to DeKalb County’s 2019 Service Delivery Strategy (the latest version published by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs), DCFR provides:

- **Fire suppression and technical rescue** services to the Cities of Avondale Estates, Brookhaven, Chamblee, Clarkston, Doraville, Dunwoody, Lithonia, Pine Lake, Stone Mountain, Tucker, and Stonecrest;
- **Fire inspections** to the Cities of Avondale Estates*, Brookhaven*, Chamblee, Clarkston, Doraville, Dunwoody, Lithonia, Pine Lake, Stone Mountain*, Tucker, and Stonecrest; and
- **Fire prevention** services (including investigations, plan review, and public education) to the Cities of Avondale Estates*, Brookhaven*, Chamblee, Clarkston, Doraville, Dunwoody*, Lithonia, Pine Lake, Stone Mountain*, Tucker, and Stonecrest.

*The Cities of Avondale Estates, Brookhaven, Dunwoody, and Stone Mountain provide some fire inspection and prevention services, while utilizing the County’s resources for others.

The Department is led by the Fire Chief and is a function of the Public Safety Department. While the Fire Chief reports to the Public Safety Director, the Fire Chief has direct oversight of the day-to-day operations of the Department. The Department is allocated 689 sworn positions and 133 civilian positions (including Emergency Medical Technicians [“EMT”] and Paramedics who provide EMS response, but are not Firefighters).¹² In addition to the Office of the Fire Chief, the Department is comprised of four sections, with each section housing at least two functions.

Office of the Fire Chief

The Fire Chief oversees the Chief of Staff, four Deputy Chiefs (who oversee the Department’s four sections), and an Administrative Assistant. In addition to the seven staff directly employed by the Department, the Office of the Fire Chief additionally includes two doctors contracted from Emory Healthcare who serve as Medical Directors for the Department. One Medical Director provides the medical licensure for the Department and oversees development of EMS procedures and policies. The second Medical Director oversees the delivery of Emergency Medical Dispatch (“EMD”) services through DCFR and the County’s E-911 Emergency Communications Center.

The Chief of Staff is classified as a Battalion Chief and serves as a project manager in order to assist the Fire Chief with implementation of strategic priorities and initiatives. The Chief of Staff oversees a Captain who serves as the Public Information Officer (“PIO”) for the Department. The PIO handles both external and internal communications for the Department, including media inquiries, daily and weekly newsletters, annual reports, and social media. A Public Education Specialist was recently assigned to report to the PIO to assist with social media, even though the Public Education Specialist job description requires education experience, rather than social media experience.

In the event of an internal investigation, employees assigned to support the investigation form an *ad hoc* Accountability and Integrity Office under the supervision of the Chief of Staff.

The Administrative Assistant supports the Fire Chief and other executive officers through the performance of administrative duties, informal supervision of other administrative personnel in the Department, management of special projects, and coordination of Department-wide social programs and projects (e.g., holiday celebrations, retreats, employee recognition ceremonies, retiree breakfasts). The duties assigned to the position frequently exceed the job description provided for the Administrative Assistant classification.

Fire & EMS Operations

The Fire & EMS Operations Section is the largest of the Department’s sections, comprising the functions responsible for provision of fire suppression, technical rescue, and EMS. The Fire & EMS Operations Deputy Chief is supported by an Administrative Assistant.

Fire Operations

¹² The Department’s count of sworn personnel includes the DeKalb Emergency Management Agency Director.

The vast majority of the Fire & EMS Operations Section's employees serve in Fire Operations, with approximately 555 of the Department's 689 sworn personnel serving as field personnel. Fire Operations personnel each serve on one of three shifts – A-Shift, B-Shift, and C-Shift – which each serve 24 hours on shift and then 48 hours off shift. The shifts rotate, resulting in each set of personnel being on shift once every three days. Each shift is supervised by an Assistant Chief, who reports to the Deputy Chief of Fire & EMS Operations. Field personnel operate out of 26 stations located throughout the County, which are divided among five battalions, each of which is led by a Battalion Chief who reports to the Assistant Chief for their respective shift. The staff at each station is led by a Captain and is comprised of the number of Firefighters, Senior Firefighters, Master Firefighters, and Driver/Operators necessary to meet the minimum staffing requirements for the fire apparatus located at the station.

To serve as a Firefighter, an employee must achieve a specific set of certifications and take a specific set of courses in fire suppression, hazardous materials ("HAZMAT") operations, EMS, and customer service, as determined by DCFR, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the National Safety Council, and the State of Georgia.¹³ After 24 months as a Firefighter, if an employee has taken the Building Construction and Engine Operator courses offered by DCFR, the Firefighter may promote to Senior Firefighter. After 24 months as a Senior Firefighter, if an employee has taken the Acting Officer in Charge, Incident Safety Officer, and Fire Inspection courses offered by DCFR, the Senior Firefighter may promote to Master Firefighter. The Senior and Master Firefighter positions are not competitive and may be achieved by any number of field personnel who meet the requirements.¹⁴

After promotion to a Master Firefighter, an employee can take a competitive assessment for the Driver/Operator classification. The Driver/Operator classification is limited to 135 employees (of which 129 are field personnel). Employees who pass the assessment are placed on a list of eligible employees based on scores and promoted in order of the list when a position becomes available.

DCFR also has three sworn Fire Command Technician positions allocated to the Department, which are intended to provide support to incident command staff by managing communications, equipment, and logistics during emergency operations and daily administrative functions. The positions were allocated in 2024 but have not yet been implemented. When implemented, the positions will be appointed through a similar competitive assessment process to the Driver/Operator classification.

An employee who has served at least 36 months in any combination of the Master Firefighter, Driver/Operator, and/or Fire Command Technician classifications; has achieved the Instructor I, Fire Officer I, and Fire Officer II certifications; and has taken the Fire Investigation course offered by DCFR, may take the competitive assessment to become a Captain. The Captain classification is limited to 127 employees (of which 111 are field personnel). Employees who pass the assessment are placed on a list of eligible employees based on scores and promoted in order of the list when a position becomes available.

¹³ Firefighter qualifications are National Professional Qualification System ("NPQ") Firefighter I and Firefighter II, HAZMAT Awareness/Operations Core, EMT at the basic or advanced level, Class C Emergency Vehicle Operator Course, Customer Service, Interior Search & Rescue, National Fire Incident Reporting System Class, Incident Command System 100 and 200, and National Incident Management System Independent Study 700 and 800.

¹⁴ For the purpose of this report, M&J uses "Firefighter" to collectively refer to all levels of Firefighter below the Battalion Chief level – Firefighter, Senior Firefighter, Master Firefighter, Driver/Operator, and Captain, unless specific delineation is required. M&J also uses "field personnel" to collective refer to the same five positions.

Battalion Chief and Assistant Chief positions are appointed at the discretion of the Fire Chief. Both positions' job descriptions list preferred qualifications, but qualifications can be waived or delayed.

Generally, sworn personnel at any level below Deputy Chief serving in administrative positions are required to return to the field in order to promote to the next level.

Each promotion to a new classification comes with a raise, but due to the lack of merit-based increases offered to County employees, Firefighters are only able to receive increases in salary when promoting or when County leadership provide public safety raises to the Department. Of note: public safety raises are generally only applied to sworn personnel – civilian personnel in the Department do not receive the same raises. The lack of regular raises has led to compression in salaries and frustration among Firefighters. As a result, many Firefighters seek second jobs, including at other fire departments, which can result in field personnel working multiple shifts in a row among multiple fire departments.

Sworn staff also supplement their income through overtime shifts with DCFR, which are paid at two times employees' regular hourly rate. The Department offers 10 overtime slots per shift in order to keep as many units operational as possible. Overtime shifts fill gaps where positions are vacant, where staff are absent due to sick leave or vacation, or where staff are assigned to training instead of active duty. Field personnel are required to fill their same classification through overtime – personnel cannot fill lower or higher classified positions while serving in an overtime slot (though may fill higher classified positions, if eligible through prior promotional testing, during their regular shifts). Employees are restricted from working 72 hours in a row, though the Department does not have a means of preventing employees working for multiple fire departments from serving 72 or more hours in a row.¹⁵ While M&J did not hear any verifiable reports of field personnel working 72 or more hours in a row, staff concerns about salaries could result in Firefighters working multiple shifts in a row among multiple departments, which could create unsafe working conditions and increased liability for the County.

Special Operations

Special Operations is a subset of Fire Operations. Field personnel at specific stations are trained and certified to perform a variety of technical rescue and special incident responses, in addition to their regular fire suppression and EMS responsibilities.

Some examples of the Special Operations teams utilized by DCFR include:

- Airport Rescue and Firefighting
- Decontamination
- Dive
- Drone
- Forestry/Wildland
- HAZMAT
- Honor Guard
- Tactical Medic
- Technical Rescue

¹⁵ An employee of two different fire departments could work 96 or more hours if they work their regular DCFR shift, an overtime shift with DCFR, their regular shift with their second fire department, and their subsequent regular DCFR shift.

Members of the Special Operations teams report through the Fire Operations chain of command for most incidents, but a Battalion Chief over Special Operations is responsible for policies, equipment, and assignment of training and certification related to the provision of Special Operations.

The Department has implemented financial incentives for members of several Special Operations teams, with additional teams set to receive similar incentives over the next couple of years.

EMS Division

DeKalb County provides EMS response to the entire County, including the municipalities, through both in-house and outsourced services. Prior to 2020, the Department maintained one ambulance (a holdover from when DeKalb County had a standalone EMS department) in order to maintain the County's license to operate pre-hospital ambulatory services. Through the end of 2020, the Department's ambulatory services were conducted entirely by a third-party contractor, American Medical Response ("AMR"). From 2020 to 2021, the County began to invest additional resources into in-house ambulatory services – increasing the number of ambulances owned and operated by the Department and allocating civilian EMS positions to DCFR. As of January 2025, the Department has expanded its EMS-specific positions to four Paramedic Supervisors, 18 Paramedics, and 51 EMTs, for a total of 73 positions (63 of which were filled as of January 4, 2025). The Department has additionally been allocated five Nurse Practitioner positions, which are intended to provide mobile integrated healthcare services alongside EMTs and Paramedics. The Nurse Practitioner positions were allocated in 2024 but have not yet been implemented.

The growing in-house EMS Division is led by a Battalion Chief, who reports to the Deputy Chief of Fire & EMS Operations. Two Captains from Fire Operations have been assigned to the EMS Operations and serve as Rescue Captains. Each Rescue Captain oversees two EMS shifts. Each shift is led by a Paramedic Supervisor and comprised of Paramedics and EMTs. The EMS Division operates two 12-hour shifts each day on a rotating basis using a 2-2-3 schedule: the day and night shifts under the first Rescue Captain work for two days, are off for two days, work for three days, are off for two days, work for two days, and then are off for three days, while the day and night shifts under the second Rescue Captain operate on an opposite rotation, as displayed below:

	Week 1							Week 2						
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Day Shift	A	A	C	C	A	A	A	C	C	A	A	C	C	C
Night Shift	B	B	D	D	B	B	B	D	D	B	B	D	D	D

	First Rescue Captain
	Second Rescue Captain

In a standard 2-2-3 schedule, the day and night shift are swapped during weeks 3 and 4 of a 28-day cycle. The Department has additionally considered the addition of a peak cycle schedule, with one shift Monday through Thursday (10 hours per shift) and a second shift Friday through Sunday (13 hours per shift) as well as other traditional and non-traditional shift options in order to provide incentives for recruitment and retention. Staff asserted that AMR has a shift change during peak hours, which increases the importance of regular staffing of DCFR in-house EMS personnel.

Of note: while shift personnel in the EMS Division operate on 12-hour shifts, the Rescue Captains are both 40-hour employees and work Monday through Friday only.

AMR and the EMS Division provide the same services to DeKalb County residents regarding pre-hospital ambulatory transports and on-site life support services. DCFR ambulances operate out of the Department's stations, which allows the two entities (AMR and DCFR) to provide coverage of the entire County. In addition to AMR and EMS Division personnel, DCFR Firefighters are dispatched to all medical calls to provide support. The Department has invested in alternative response vehicles, known within the Department as "Squads," which are smaller vehicles (often converted pickup trucks) upfitted with EMS equipment that Firefighters can take on EMS calls rather than deploying larger firefighting apparatus to medical calls. While the Squads can't provide pre-hospital transport, Firefighters are certified at least to the basic EMT level, which allows them to provide basic life support until Advanced EMTs or Paramedics arrive on scene.

Support & Fiscal Services

The Deputy Chief of the Support & Fiscal Services Section is supported by a Battalion Chief and an Administrative Assistant. The two Chiefs oversee the Fiscal Office and the Logistics Division. The sworn personnel in the Support & Fiscal Services Section are all 40-hour administrative employees.

Fiscal Office

The Fiscal Office is led by the Fiscal Officer, who oversees two Fiscal Officer Assistants and a Requisition Technician. The Fiscal Officer is charged with maintaining the Department's accountability for financial processes, including procurement, accounts payable, training and travel reimbursements, grant management, tuition reimbursement, and budget preparation and management.

The Fiscal Officer Assistant and Requisition Technician positions perform similar duties, assisting the Fiscal Officer with procurement support, budget tracking, and financial reconciliation.

While the Fiscal Officer is entering requisitions and inputting data for grants reporting – the Department does not employ any staff in a grants management function. End-user units provide some grant management services (such as the Chief of Staff facilitating the technical aspects of the Assistance to Firefighters Grants ("AFG") Program award for elevator extraction training equipment) but the Department has not fully developed a grant management strategy and management program.

Logistics Division

The Logistics Division is divided among five units: Fleet Services, Reserve Fleet, Supply Services, Technical Services, and Facilities. Each of the units, except Facilities, is led by a Captain who serves in a 40-hour administrative role.

Fleet Services

The Fleet Services Captain is assisted by an administrative Driver/Operator who serves as Fleet Liaison. The Department's Fleet Services Unit manages a fleet of approximately 220 vehicles, ranging from upfitted pickup trucks to ambulances and aerial ladder trucks. DCFR's Fleet Services Unit works closely with the Fleet Maintenance Division of the Public Works Department to purchase and upfit new vehicles, conduct preventative maintenance on current vehicles, and arrange for outsourced repair of vehicles in the event of mechanical failure or damage. The Fleet Services Unit additionally purchases equipment for new vehicles.

Reserve Fleet

The Reserve Fleet Captain manages two sets of vehicles: the Reserve Fleet and the Ready Reserve Fleet. The Reserve Fleet is comprised of the apparatus that have been replaced in regular service but have not yet been retired. If an apparatus used in the field needs to go out of service for an extended period of time, a backup vehicle can be sourced from the Reserve Fleet – though the Reserve Fleet is not kept equipped, so field personnel need to transition their equipment from the out-of-service apparatus to the Reserve Fleet apparatus.

The Ready Reserve Fleet is an initiative by the Department to maintain a selection of apparatus that are stocked with equipment and can be ready at a moment's notice to temporarily replace apparatus undergoing maintenance. Whereas the Reserve Fleet is intended for longer-term replacements, the Ready Reserve Fleet is maintained for temporary replacements without requiring personnel to move their equipment from the out-of-service apparatus to the Ready Reserve Fleet apparatus. The Ready Reserve fleet is currently comprised of 13 fire engines with the goal of eventually expanding to include additional types of apparatus.

In addition to the Reserve Fleet and Ready Reserve Fleet, the Reserve Fleet Captain additionally oversees a civilian position responsible for maintenance of small-engine equipment (*e.g.*, chainsaws).

Supply Services

The Supply Services Captain manages the Department's warehouse, including the ordering, stocking, and distribution of staff uniforms (with the exception of turnout gear) and supplies. The Supply Services Captain is supported by three civilian employees who help maintain the inventory, stock new supplies, solicit quotes, and submit requisitions based on supplies needed. Each of the five field battalions is assigned a weekly deadline for ordering supplies and a specific day of the week in which the Supply Services Unit delivers supplies to that battalion's stations.

In addition to the civilian personnel, the Supply Services Captain oversees a Master Firefighter who serves as the Department's EMS Pharmaceuticals Coordinator. The EMS Pharmaceuticals Coordinator manages the Department's pharmaceutical supply levels and purchases new supplies as needed.

Technical Services

The Technical Services Captain manages the purchasing, upkeep, cleaning, repair, and assignment of the Department's turnout gear. In addition to the pants, jackets, boots, helmets, gloves, and hoods, the Technical Services Captain additionally manages the Department's self-contained breathing apparatus ("SCBA") including scheduling of a third-party service to conduct repairs and testing of the SCBA. The Department assigns each Firefighter two pairs of turnout gear to help mitigate the frequency that Firefighters are not responding to incidents in soiled turnout gear or wet turnout gear that has been washed but not fully dried.

Previously, the Technical Services Captain oversaw the civilian employee responsible for maintenance of small-engine repair. Staff noted that the duties and supervisory assignments delegated to sworn personnel in administrative positions are often fluid.

Facilities

The Department employs two Fire Maintenance Coordinators to ensure that facilities remain functional, and maintenance issues are addressed. The Fire Maintenance Coordinators work with the Facilities

Maintenance Department to maintain existing items (*e.g.*, toilets, lights, etc.), while working with contractors to add or replace structural improvements related to fire rescue (*e.g.*, extractors, station bay doors, etc.). Department staff acknowledged that funding is limited, and the Department is often uncertain whether DCFR should be paying for certain maintenance activities or whether Facilities Maintenance should.

As the Department begins to replace stations and build new stations, the Fire Maintenance Coordinators have been involved with the design and construction process.

The Facilities unit tracks maintenance requests and work performed through a spreadsheet, rather than through a ticketing system. Requests are submitted by stations or staff in other facilities (*e.g.*, the warehouse, Fire Academy, headquarters) via email and logged into the spreadsheet.

Planning & Risk Reduction

The Planning & Risk Reduction Section Deputy Chief is supported by an Administrative Assistant and oversees two functional areas: the Fire Marshal's Office and the Appraisal & Planning Division. The sworn personnel in the Planning & Risk Reduction Section are all 40-hour administrative employees.

Fire Marshal's Office

The County's Fire Marshal is classified at the Battalion Chief level and oversees four units responsible for community risk reduction: Fire Investigations, Inspections, Plan Review, and Public Education.

Personnel in all four units asserted challenges rising from limited promotional and/or salary growth opportunities – both for civilian staff and for sworn staff who have to give up their Driver/Operator classification to transition into an administrative position, but have to return to the field to promote. Of the four units, one is managed by a Captain and two are managed by Supervisors, whose salary grades are the same level as a 40-hours Captain, but who are not considered Captains for promotional purposes. The fourth unit does not currently have a supervisor role.

Fire Investigations

The Fire Investigations Unit is responsible for investigating the origin, cause, and determination of fires. Comprised of seven sworn Fire Investigators and Senior Fire Investigators, who previously served in the field as Firefighters, the Fire Investigations Unit is led by a Fire Investigations Supervisor.

The members of the Fire Investigations Unit are certified through the Georgia Public Safety Training Center ("GPSTC") as Fire Investigators and through the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council ("POST") as peace officers. As peace officers, the Fire Investigations Unit is able to conduct every part of the investigation – from examination of the scene during the incident response through to prosecution.

The Fire Investigations Unit uses the DeKalb County Police Department's mandate as a law enforcement agency to conduct its investigations, as well as utilizes Police Department equipment contracts and systems (though staff noted that they don't have access to the Police Department's vendor representatives so haven't received training on the resources available). Like many fire investigations functions, DCFR's Fire Investigations Unit exists in a challenging space of being a law enforcement function within a fire department – with two sets of certifications and knowledge bases that don't fully align with leadership in either the law enforcement agency through which the fire investigations

function is mandated, or the fire department, which can result in conflicting priorities. While not common, some fire investigations functions undergo certification through the Georgia Law Enforcement Certification Program hosted by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police (or a similar program in other states) to evaluate the functional unit's processes, procedures, policies, and resources from a law enforcement standpoint.

In order to support the Fire Investigations Unit, the Department has introduced the 509 program, which is a Firefighter on each shift who attends every fire incident to conduct an initial origin and cause investigation to determine whether or not the Fire Investigator on call needs to come out to the scene. The program has allowed the Department to limit the number of on-call responses required of Fire Investigators, ensure investigations begin while fire suppression activities are ongoing, and provide field personnel with insight into the fire investigations process.

In addition to fire origin, cause, and determination investigations, two of the Fire Investigations Unit staff are certified to conduct Internal Affairs investigations – during which they report to the Chief of Staff as the *ad hoc* Accountability and Integrity Office.

Inspections

The Inspections Unit conducts inspections of permitted developments in the County, including new construction and expansions of structures, to determine compliance with fire-prevention codes, ordinances, and laws. Inspections are also conducted based on public complaints or on an annual basis for certain types of structures, as required by the State, including schools, daycares, healthcare facilities, multi-family structures, etc. The Inspections Unit frequently works with the Planning & Sustainability Department (“P&S”) to identify necessary inspections, but DCFR departmental leadership noted that there are numerous issues with the Inspection Unit's interactions with the system used by P&S (Infor Public Sector Suite, also frequently referred to as Hansen), including inspections being assigned to former employees (rather than auto-assigning to current employees based on the geography assigned to each employee) and permits not being assigned in workflow to DCFR (which is only discovered when members of the public call DCFR asking about delays).

In addition to standard inspections, the Inspections Unit partners with other departments, including the DeKalb County Police Department, Public Health Department, and Code Compliance Administration, to conduct late night sweeps of businesses with known high levels of code violations and criminal activity.

The Inspections Unit is comprised of both sworn and civilian positions. Firefighter Inspectors previously served in the field before transferring to the Inspections Unit. Firefighter Inspectors have the opportunity to promote to Senior Firefighter Inspectors based on time in the position and additional certifications achieved. Fire Inspector Technicians are civilian roles that perform the same duties and responsibilities as their sworn counterparts, except when a code, ordinance, or law requires inspection by a sworn position. Fire Inspector Technicians do not have promotional opportunities. The Inspections Unit is led by two Fire Inspections Supervisors – only sworn personnel can serve as Fire Inspections Supervisors.

Plan Review

The Plan Review Unit conducts reviews of building and fire protection plans to ensure compliance with fire-related codes, ordinances, laws, and standards. The Plan Review Unit is comprised of four Building & Fire Plan Examiners (“Plan Examiner”) and a Permit Technician – though only two Plan Examiner

positions are filled, and the Permit Technician is frequently utilized by the larger Fire Marshal's Office. All five positions are civilian positions. Of the four Plan Examiner positions, one serves as the informal subject matter expert on sprinkler systems and one of the vacant positions previously served as the informal subject matter expert on fire alarm systems. While a job description exists for a Lead Fire Building & Fire Plans Examiner position, and staff suggested the position previously existed, the Department is not allocated a lead position, or other supervisory position, for the Plan Review Unit. Plan Examiners do not have promotional opportunities.

Similar to the Inspections Unit, the Plan Review Unit regularly interacts with P&S and uses the Infor Public Sector Suite software for management of the plan review process. DCFR staff asserted that the system does not correctly assign plan reviews to Department employees and has frequently duplicated fees for customers, with no post-pay audit conducted by P&S to verify that the fees collected from customers were correct. Additionally, staff noted that the system establishes review deadlines based on creation of the request and initial payment – not upload of the customer's project documents, which can result in unrealistic timelines for review of building plans and false indications of staff failing to meet service level agreements.

Public Education

The Public Education Unit teaches fire safety, fire prevention, and general risk reduction to members of the DeKalb County community through a variety of educational programs and events. Educational topics range from proper car seats for children, bike safety, accident awareness, avoiding heat strokes, gun safety, poison safety, conducting fire drills, teen driver safety, and more. The Public Education Unit partners with a variety of community, State, and federal entities to conduct events such as bike rodeos and the DeKalb County Fire Safety Festival, as well as to coordinate programs, such as Safe Kids DeKalb, for which DCFR serves as the lead agency. In addition to education programs, the members of the Public Education Unit have taken on the responsibility of installing smoke alarms in residents' homes (which used to be conducted by field personnel, who have better equipment to do so).

The Public Education Unit is led by a Captain who oversees nine Public Education Specialists and an Office Assistant. The Public Education Specialists do not have promotional opportunities.

Appraisal & Planning Division

The Appraisal & Planning Division ("A&P" or "Division") is led by a Battalion Chief, who oversees a selection of sworn and civilian staff, including:

- One Captain (with a second recently allocated to provide additional support),
- One Departmental System Administrator,
- One Geographic Information System ("GIS") Analyst,
- One Management Analyst I,
- One Management Analyst II,
- Two Master Firefighters,
- One Paramedic, and
- One Senior Firefighter.

The Division performs a variety of functions for the Department related to data input and analysis, as well as appraisal and planning of the Department's operations. The Division serves as a liaison between

different units and other County departments, and helps provide insight into DCFR's progress toward successfully achieving its goals and strategic priorities. A&P staff are responsible for administering the Department's systems (including the Computer-Aided Dispatch ["CAD"] system and emergency management software [ImageTrend]); conducting quality assurance, quality control, and quality improvement of reports submitted to State and federal systems; analyzing operational performance data and creating dashboards; and analyzing GIS data. The Division works to ensure reporting compliance, as well as provide executive officers with the information necessary to make data-driven decisions.

In addition to internal reporting and data analysis, A&P is additionally responsible for providing quality assurance of emergency medical dispatch ("EMD") calls handled by the E-911 Emergency Call Center. Several of the Division's sworn staff work with E-911 dispatchers to help dispatchers understand policies and protocols for EMD and emergency fire dispatch, and provide training for new and experienced dispatchers as necessary.

The Division additionally serves as accreditation managers for certain County functions – helping maintain Accredited Center of Excellence designation for EMD through the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch, and is leading DCFR's process to receive accreditation through the Center for Public Safety Excellence's Commission on Fire Accreditation International.

Training & Professional Services

The Training & Professional Services Section Deputy Chief is supported by an Administrative Assistant and oversees three functional areas: the Health & Safety Officer ("HSO"), the Training Division, and Professional Services. The sworn personnel in the Training & Professional Services Section are all 40-hour administrative employees.

Health & Safety Officer

The HSO is largely responsible for coordinating programs and recommending policies that enhance the health and safety of the Department's employees – especially those serving in the field. The HSO role is filled by an administrative Captain, and different individuals who fill the role often have different focuses based on the current needs of the Department. For example, the current HSO has invested time and resources into mental health support programs, while the previous HSO was primarily focused on the Covid-19 pandemic. Other topics frequently addressed by the HSO role include peer support, nutrition and fitness, infectious disease control, and cancer screenings. Additionally, the HSO assists with reviews of accidents and on-the-job injuries and recommends changes to policies, procedures, and/or training as a result of trends in accidents and injuries.

While field personnel serving light duty occasionally support the HSO, the role does not have permanent civilian or sworn staff support.

Training Division

The Training Division is led by a Battalion Chief who oversees three Captains – one over EMS training, one over fire recruit training, and one over professional development.

EMS Training

New recruits to the Department begin with EMS training, which is conducted in the Department's headquarters. Recruits are trained to the basic EMT level, which allows staff to provide basic life

support services. The Department has prioritized training as many staff as possible to the Advanced EMT (“AEMT”) level, when possible. Longer tenured sworn employees of the Department are certified at the EMT Intermediate level (a designation which was replaced by AEMT per the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration). The Training Division has additionally taught a limited number of Paramedic classes, with the intention of providing more regular Paramedic licensure.

In addition to training Department employees to the EMT, AEMT, or Paramedic level, the EMS training staff provide resources for maintaining licensure.

The Captain over EMS training is supported by six staff who assist with administering and teaching EMS courses. The Captain additionally administers Vector Solutions, the Department’s training and standard operating procedures database.

Fire Recruit Training

After passing EMS training, recruits transition to the Fire Academy for fire recruit training, which is located on a separate campus owned by the County. Fire recruit training consists of classroom-based and hands-on training intended to help recruits achieve the certifications required to be sworn in as Firefighters.

The Captain over fire recruit training is supported by eight staff who assist in administering and teaching fire suppression, fire prevention, technical rescue, HAZMAT, and other related courses. The Captain additionally schedules use of the Fire Academy for in-service units and conducts Driver/Operator licensing.

The Fire Academy campus includes several classroom, locker room, and administrative portable buildings; a retired burn building used for forced entry training; an active burn building used for live fire training; a vehicle fire prop; a confined space exercise setup; and a seven-story training tower, which houses the Department’s training fire engine. Additionally, the Fire Academy added a flashover simulator in 2024 through an AFG award. With the exception of the portable buildings (which were installed with SPLOST¹⁶ funding), the Fire Academy facilities are older, with some structures seemingly not updated in several decades. The active burn building is reaching the end of its permissible lifetime for live fire training, and is limited in the opportunities it provides, as the Training Division is not able to rearrange the interior layout of the structure (which can result in recruits memorizing the layout and not fully learning to adapt to unique scenarios). The campus does not have a formal parking lot, and the pavement used by both vehicles and recruits is filled with cracks and potholes – presenting hazards for vehicles and recruits alike. Driver training is conducted off-site in a former parking lot shared with the Sanitation Department – however, it is unlikely that the parking lot is appropriately constructed to handle the weight of fire apparatus and sanitation trucks.

Professional Development

In addition to providing recruit training, the Training Division provides opportunities for current Firefighters to maintain certifications and evolve along career paths. The Captain over professional development and the Battalion Chief over the Training Division issue a regularly updated Professional Development Handbook to the sworn staff of the Department, explaining the career and licensure paths available, promotional ranks and processes, role of the Fire Marshal’s Office, requirements of Special

¹⁶ Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax

Operations units, and requirements to serve as an Instructor. The Captain regularly recruits other Captains, as well as Chiefs of various levels, to serve as Instructors for specialized courses, as well as arranged for external subject matter experts to provide courses or seminars that veteran staff can use for their continuing education.

Professional Services

The Department's Professional Services functional area is comprised of three related offices – the Recruitment Office, the Payroll Services Office, and the Human Resources ("HR") Administrative Support Office.

Recruitment Office

The Recruitment Office is led by a Captain, with the support of a sworn employee who serves in a Recruiter role. The current employee in the Recruiter role is classified as a Driver/Operator, but the role was advertised to sworn employees of all classification levels.

The Recruitment Office conducts recruitment of fire recruits through career fairs and presentations at local high schools, technical schools, universities, and military bases, as well as through social media. The Recruitment Office assists job applicants through the hiring process, which involves an application submitted to the HR Department, a written examination and physical agility test, two rounds of interviews (one with a variety of staff from different levels and job functions, and the second with executive staff), a psychiatric evaluation, a background check, and a medical physical. In the last few years, DCFR has condensed the hiring process to three months, and initiates a new recruit class of 30 to 35 recruits approximately every 10 to 12 weeks. While the aim is to recruit frequently enough to maintain low vacancy numbers, the Training Division has voiced concerns that the quick turnaround is resulting in the recruitment of individuals who aren't the right fit for the job, as well as too many overlapping classes trying to use the same facilities simultaneously.

The Recruitment Office also works with experienced hires, but staff asserted that the number is minimal. EMS Division staff are recruited as experienced hires who have already achieved the required EMT and/or Paramedic licenses.

Payroll Services Office

The Payroll Services Office is led by a Payroll/Personnel Supervisor, who oversees a Payroll/Personnel Assistant Lead and three Payroll/Personnel Assistants.

The Payroll Services Office processes payroll for all of the Department's employees, including ensuring field personnel are processed as 53-hour employees rather than 40-hour employees. Each Payroll/Personnel Assistant processes payroll for at least 174 53-hour employees, as well as a number of 40-hour employees. Additionally, the Payroll Services Office processes promotions, demotions, transfers, and new hires in the County's human capital management system, CV360. The Payroll/Personnel Supervisor produces filled positions reports, enters requisitions, submits badge requests, conducts onboarding, and manages a variety of other administrative responsibilities.

The Payroll Services Office also reviews time entries submitted by DCFR staff who use the Department's timeclocks and enters time entries for staff who submit their time via timesheets.

Human Resources Administrative Support Office

The HR Administrative Support Office (“HR Support”) is led by an Administrative Support Manager, who is supported by an Administrative Assistant and field personnel temporarily assigned to light duty. HR Support processes Family and Medical Leave Act (“FMLA”) absences, workers’ compensation claims, disciplinary actions, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”) appeal hearings (and similar court matters), and required accommodations in adherence with the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”). In addition to standard HR-related requests and processes, HR Support assists employees with unique HR-related issues, questions, and processes, as needed.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

DCFR is a highly strategic department that uses data-driven decision-making to regularly assess its operations and implement a system of continuous improvement. A small sample of strategic initiatives undertaken by DCFR in the last year, or planned for the coming year, includes:

- Overhauling the accident review and operator remediation process;
- Analyzing response time data to identify areas for improvement;
- Compiling after-action data from the January 2025 severe winter event, and using the data to improve future responses;
- Addressing ambulance patient offload time (the interval between an ambulance arriving at a hospital and the assumption of care by hospital staff for the patient) with Emory Healthcare;
- Introducing a public education campaign on appropriate use of 911 emergency calls;
- Implementing of Operative IQ as an inventory and warehouse management system, allowing stations to submit supply requisitions to the warehouse, which automatically deducts the requested supplies from the inventory; and
- Utilizing an AFG award to certify approximately 70 field personnel as firefighter fitness trainers, which will assist field personnel in helping to design and implement personal fitness and welfare programs for their peers.

The Department frequently utilizes workgroups to assist executive officers with the identification and implementation of solutions and beneficial programs. When Department employees identify issues that the Department could address, the Deputy Chiefs have the authority to initiate workgroups comprised of staff across various levels and functions within the Department. Workgroups research the identified concern, as well as leading practices and solutions (e.g., policies, programs, grants, technologies, equipment, etc.) that could address the concern. The workgroups present their findings and their proposals to the Deputy Chief supervising the workgroup, who in turn has the option of presenting proposals to the Fire Chief. While the Fire Chief has the ultimate decision-making authority, the workgroups allow for transparency into decisions, increased buy-in, and utilize subject matter experts to present various views in order to craft a solution to Departmental issues.

In addition to the Department's targeted strategic initiatives, DCFR focuses broader strategic priorities, including the following:

- Accreditation
- Public Protection Classification Rating
- EMS Delivery
- Facilities
- Retention

Accreditation

The Department is currently undergoing the accreditation process from the Center for Public Safety Excellence's ("CPSE") Commission on Fire Accreditation International ("CFAI"). The CPSE accreditation process involves a series of self-assessments conducted by the Department on each key functional area, an emphasis on community risk reduction and defining standards of cover, and development of a community-driven strategic plan. CFAI representatives assist departments undergoing the accreditation process and will conduct a review of DCFR to identify any gaps in the Department's self-assessment. CPSE accreditation is considered the premiere designation for fire departments and provides a model for continuous improvement, enhanced accountability, and more Department-wide visibility into activities and decisions. Only 12 fire departments in the State of Georgia currently hold CPSE accreditation – four of which are managed by the U.S. Department of Defense.

On December 6, 2024, the Department issued its Community Risk Assessment/Standards of Cover – the first major milestone in the accreditation process. In March 2025, the Department initiated the second phase by hosting the first of its self-assessment sessions.

Public Protection Classification Rating

The Insurance Services Office ("ISO") is a national data analytics provider that evaluates fire protection for communities across the country. ISO has created the Fire Suppression Rating Schedule ("FSRS"), which is a manual containing the criteria used in reviewing the fire prevention and fire suppression capabilities of individual communities or fire protection areas. The FSRS measures the major elements of a community's fire protection system and develops a numerical grading called a Public Protection Classification ("PPC"). A PPC score ranges from 1 (best protection) to 10 (no protection). A better PPC score can be used as a factor by insurance companies to lower insurance prices on structures within community. DeKalb County has maintained a PPC score of 2/2X, as confirmed by the latest evaluation in September 2024.¹⁷

The Department has expressed improving DeKalb County's score to 1/1X – the highest score possible for a community. The Department's largest opportunity areas for improvement, according to the latest report, are improved deployment analysis, increased company personnel, and conduct of pre-fire planning inspections (which are not currently performed by the Department).

¹⁷ The first number in the PPC score represents properties within five miles of a fire station and 1,000 feet of a creditable water source. The second number represents properties beyond 1,000 feet of a water source. The X in the score represents a fire suppression system that includes a creditable dispatch center and fire department, but no creditable water supply (e.g., water hydrants).

EMS Delivery

As the Department has increased its in-house EMS delivery over the last five years, DCFR executive officers have looked to County leadership to provide direction on whether to grow or maintain services. EMS incident responses have trended upwards for most departments in the fire rescue industry, with medical services becoming the majority of calls most departments respond to – the same is true for DCFR. The trend in EMS calls has encouraged Department leadership to train as many staff as possible beyond the basic EMT level to the AEMT level and seek ways to alleviate strain on firefighting apparatus, as well as ambulances.

Through the introduction of Squads as alternative response vehicles, the Department has been able to deploy Firefighters in support of EMS Division and AMR medics without having to also deploy the Department's fire engines or other firefighting apparatus. The Department also introduced a Mobile Integrated Health ("MIH") unit, which will be staffed by Nurse Practitioners. An MIH unit utilizes a specialty-built vehicle to transport healthcare providers (such as Paramedics and Nurse Practitioners) directly to patients in order to provide out-of-hospital medical care for cases not requiring hospitalization. The goal of the MIH unit is to increase access to community healthcare options, while decreasing costs for patients. AMR utilizes a similar nurse navigation program to provide residents with essential medical advice and coordinate follow-up care without increasing strain on the E-911 system and the Department's and AMR's ambulatory services.

In order to best determine the most appropriate path forward for the provision of EMS deliver within DeKalb County, Department leadership needs guidance from County leadership on whether to grow, maintain, or decrease DCFR's in-house EMS Division and the resources allocated to the EMS Division. The County contracted a third-party vendor in 2024 to conduct a feasibility study of the Department's ability to sustain the provision of EMS. The study calculated the costs of different operational models to present the County with various options for the future of EMS delivery.

Of note: If the County decides to enhance the provision of EMS by DCFR, relying solely on Medical Directors who actively practice medicine with Emory Healthcare might not provide regular enough support for EMTs and Paramedics. The Department could consider the addition of a full-time clinician position to supplement (but not supplant) the Medical Directors.

Facilities

The Department has recognized that the current facility infrastructure is unable to fully meet the needs of DeKalb County and its residents. Many of the Department's fire stations were built in the mid-20th century and have only received critical corrective maintenance. According to Department staff, the average age of the County's fire stations is 42 years old. Last year, the Facilities unit conducted an assessment of all current stations in order to identify needed improvements, and has requested a capital improvement plan to address the necessary repairs and updates.

In addition to station repairs, the Department has identified plans to replace a series of stations and begin constructing new stations, with the goal of eventually expanding from 26 to 35 stations throughout the County. The Department has already replaced one station – Station 7 – and has begun the process of designing a second replacement – Station 27 – through use of SPLOST funding. Prior to the successful passing of the SPLOST by the County, the Department did not have a funding plan for station replacements and additions.

During facility tours and interviews, M&J staff identified safety and security concerns with the Department’s headquarters and Fire Academy. While the Department utilizes security personnel to allow access through the headquarters’ front door and controls entry to most areas with badge access, there are parts of the building where medical supplies and other expensive equipment are stored that have minimal security, and visitors to the building are not required to walk through a metal detector. At the Fire Academy, the perimeter fence provides limited security to the facility, which could result in liability concerns for the County if a member of the community gained access and injured themselves on any of the Department’s training equipment or structures.

Retention

The Department views employee retention as one of its largest challenges. In the last five years, the Department has experienced fluctuations in turnover rate in Firefighters, Senior Firefighters, Master Firefighters, Driver/Operators, and Captains.¹⁸ The table below depicts the turnover rate for Firefighter classifications each year in the reviewed period.

Year	Turnover Rate
2020	9.28%
2021	17.95%
2022	17.27%
2023	7.64%
2024	4.77%

Source: Department-provided staffing data

The average turnover rate for the Department’s Firefighters was between 10% and 20% during the reviewed period. Of the Firefighters who departed their position within the reviewed period, the average tenure in the Department was 2,716 days (7.44 years). Of the current Firefighters, as of January 2025, the average tenure in the Department is 3,806 days (10.43 years). The average headcount within the reviewed period was 509.67 Firefighters (out of 573).

DCFR staff across all levels identified retention and turnover as a challenge for the Department. DCFR is one of the most active fire departments in the metro Atlanta region, with staff trained to a higher level than many neighboring departments can offer in house, and with staff gaining a higher level of experience due to a higher call volume. Department staff asserted in interviews with M&J that employees maintain a high level of job satisfaction with the Department and in serving DeKalb County – an assertion supported by employee engagement surveys conducted by an independent third party in 2020 and 2024. However, DCFR staff perceive the Department as paying lower levels of compensation to employees than many neighboring fire departments, as well as providing fewer defined benefits due to a lack of clarity regarding the future of the County’s firefighting pension.

In addition to field personnel, Department staff identified concerns resulting in turnover of civilian staff. Civilian staff do not receive the same public safety raises as sworn personnel and have fewer promotional pathways, resulting in salary compression and frustration from employees looking to grow in their careers. Oftentimes, civilian staff perceive the best opportunity to improve their compensation

¹⁸ This analysis includes both operations and administrative Firefighters, *et al.* The analysis does not include Fire Recruits or the newly created Fire Command Technician positions.

and receive promotional opportunities is to leave the Department – either for another County department or an outside employer.

The Department has initiated a workgroup with the goal of studying the factors leading to staff turnover and proposing solutions that the Department can implement to increase retention.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

The Department maintains a series of guiding documents, including an Employee Manual, Patient Care Protocols, a Procedure Manual, a Policy Manual, and numerous individual process and system guides and checklists. The Department maintains its guiding documentation in Vector Solutions (DCFR's training and standard operating procedures database) and requires employees to sign a statement of understanding within the system any time policies or procedures are updated. The versions of the guiding documentation provided to M&J indicated that the comprehensive guiding documents – the Patient Care Protocols, the Procedure Manual, and the Policy Manual – were most recently updated in 2024, while the Employee Manual has an effective date of 2013, with indication it was most recently updated in 2022.

Some Department staff expressed uncertainty that civilian employees are regularly reviewing changes to policies and procedures in Vector Solutions, which results in inconsistent practices between sworn and civilian employees, as well as among different civilian employee functional units.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department tracks a vast amount of data, which is published in a variety of daily, weekly, quarterly, and annual reports. The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

Assistant Chiefs and Battalion Chiefs review three primary reports on a daily basis that provide insight into the status of Fire Operations: incomplete Patient Care Reports for EMS, incomplete National Fire Incident Reporting System Reports, and Wheels Turning, which provides apparatus and response performance data.

Executive officers review a comprehensive weekly report that tracks the performance of Fire Operations, EMS operations (through Fire Operations and the EMS Division), and the Fire Marshal's Office, as well as staffing and training data.

Executive officers review a quarterly performance report tracking EMS delivery by a combination of Fire Operations, the Ems Division and AMR. The report provides response time performance and penalties assessed for DeKalb County as a whole, as well as for multiple municipalities.

The Department issues three primary annual reports: the Year-End Report presents a year-over-year review of key performance data, the Response Performance Gap Analysis measures response time against established performance standards, and the Unit/Station Run Volume Analysis tracks response workload distribution among each of the units and stations within the Department.

In addition to standard reports, the Department utilizes the Appraisal & Planning Division to develop *ad hoc* and specialty reports, as well as regularly updating dashboards, in order to use a vast amount of data to drive decisions, such as staffing levels, relocation of apparatus, budget priorities, etc.

Department leadership understands the importance of not just utilizing input and output data (*e.g.*, number of incident responses, number of building inspections, etc.), but also outcome data to show performance (*e.g.*, response times). The Department has used the Appraisal & Planning Division to refine its performance data to fully explore each step in a process and identify where the Department has the most opportunity to improve its performance (*e.g.*, reviewing each component of response time instead of only considering overall response time).

While the Department's reporting is comprehensive and provides the level of insight necessary for internal staff, the Department has an opportunity to improve its reporting narratives. Reports frequently fill one or more pages entirely with graphs, tables, and figures, but with limited narrative or context. While reporting at the 90th percentile is common for the fire service, those outside the fire service might assume the response times reported are averages, rather than reflections of the times in which 90% of responses occur.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

With an organization as large and spread out as DCFR, it can be difficult to manage employee culture, engagement, and buy-in. Field personnel, as well as personnel located at other facilities (*e.g.*, a warehouse or a training facility), often see a fire department's headquarters as an "ivory tower" with little insight into the decision-making process for those outside of headquarters. The presence of three field operations shifts creates a challenge for communications – as one piece of information can take three or more days to reach all employees – further complicating employee sentiment.

Overall, DCFR leadership manages the challenges to employee engagement and buy-in well. The Department utilizes weekly communications through the PIO and the Fire Chief to help ensure all three shifts, as well as all 40-hour employees, receive the same messaging. The Fire Chief hosts a monthly general staff meeting, with in-person and online attendance, to communicate directly with employees and give employees the opportunity to hear from each functional area. Regular communication from the Fire Chief, while not always to the level all staff would like, has enhanced employee engagement and buy-in. The Department's utilization of workgroups has further enhanced engagement, buy-in, and transparency into the decision-making process.

The biggest challenge to employee culture, engagement, and buy-in for the Department is the perception of inconsistent treatment between sworn and civilian employees. While some of the differences are outside the Department's control (*e.g.*, public service raises), M&J noted that all-civilian units (or mostly civilian units) were more likely to raise concerns related to culture, engagement, and buy-in than units comprised primarily or entirely of sworn personnel.

Even with some concerns over communications and inconsistent treatment, staff largely expressed trust in the current Fire Chief, with many personnel who spoke to M&J asserting that the Department has improved in terms of performance and culture over the last decade and attributing those improvements to the current Fire Chief.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

As previously mentioned, the Department is currently in the second stage of CPSE accreditation, having recently begun the self-assessment process. The Department's willingness to undergo the self-assessment process shows a dedication to continuous improvement and implementation of leading

practices. The workgroups implemented by the Department additionally provide opportunities for continuous improvement through research into leading practices, technologies, resources, and policies.

The Department owns and operates its own Fire Academy to train new recruits. DCFR is able to train new recruits on site as opposed to sending newly hired staff off to a training conducted by a third party. The Department additionally offers numerous continuing education opportunities for current sworn staff, with the Training Division issuing a regularly updated Professional Development Handbook (which provides staff with comprehensive information about career paths and promotional opportunities) and a continuing education schedule that repeats highly desired training opportunities (such as Fire Officer I training and certification) on a regularly rotating basis.

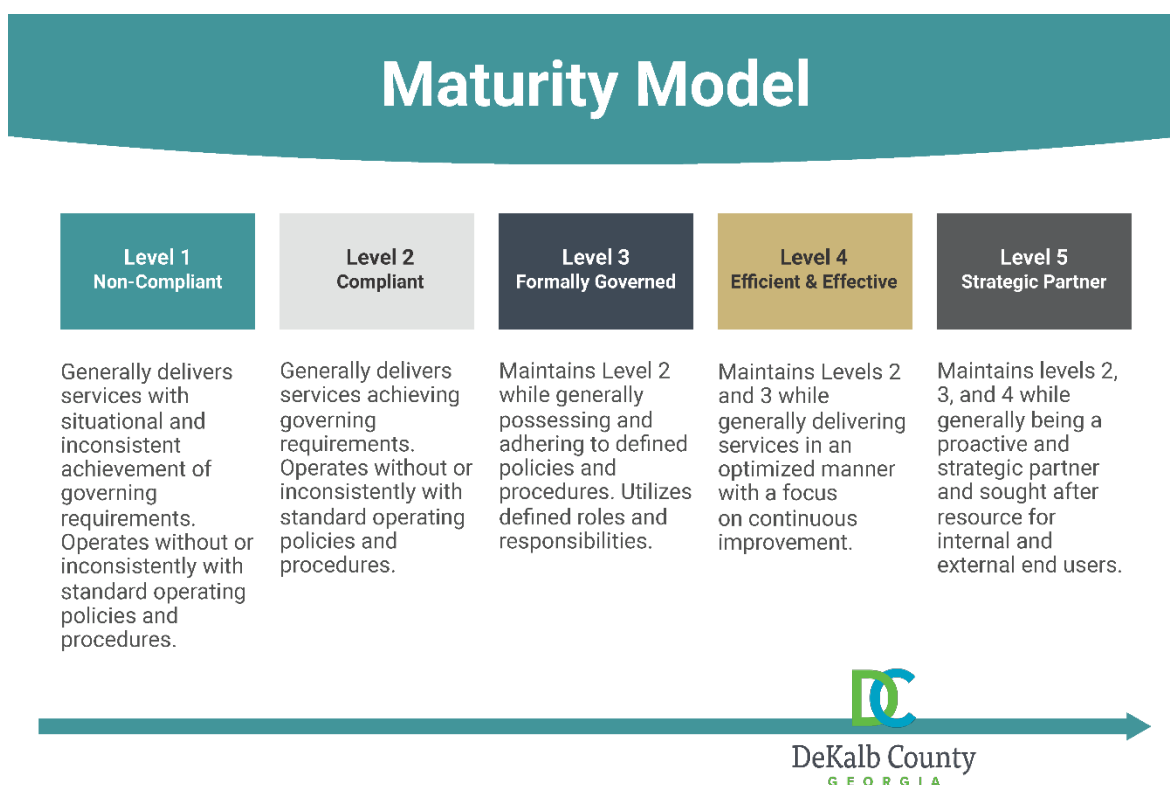
DCFR regularly invests in cutting edge fire apparatus and equipment, and has implemented a series of programs to mitigate unnecessary wear on apparatus and mitigate accidents. Programs include:

- Squads – The Department introduced alternative response vehicles for Firefighters to use instead of larger fire apparatus when responding to medical incidents. Utilizing the Squads cuts down on apparatus wear and keeps larger apparatus in service for other emergencies.
- Ready Reserve Fleet – The Department maintains 13 reserve fire engines ready to be exchanged for in-serve engines at a moment's notice. The fully equipped Ready Reserve Fleet allow in-service apparatus to go in for routine preventative maintenance without a disruption of service.
- Dashboard Cameras – The Department has installed dashboard cameras in each of the fire apparatus. The cameras alert field personnel and administrative officers of dangerous driving behavior (*e.g.*, phone use while operating apparatus, exceeding allowable speeds, drivers not paying attention to the road, etc.). The cameras also alert the Fleet Services Unit when warning lights (*e.g.*, check engine light) display in the apparatus.

Providing a backup set of turnout gear to field personnel can often be cost prohibitive for fire departments. DCFR, however, has prioritized ensuring every Firefighter has two pairs of turnout gear, which is a leading practice in the fire service. During incident responses, turnout gear can become soiled, damaged, or otherwise temporarily or permanently unusable. By providing each Firefighter two pairs of turnout gear, the Department ensures that field personnel will have a set of well-fitting gear to utilize while their primary set is in the extractor to remove contaminants, drying, or with the Technical Services Unit for repair.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 4: Efficient & Effective, while bordering on Level 5: Strategic Partner.

While the Department maintains standardized policies and procedures that are consistently implemented during operations, and utilizes a vast amount of data for strategic decision-making, the Department has several opportunities to improve its service delivery through retention efforts, a facility replacement strategy, and the continuous improvement assessments included in the CPSE accreditation process.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: The County maintains a selection of intergovernmental agreements with local municipalities, as well as files a Service Delivery Strategy document with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The documents do not consistently provide clarity as to the role of DeKalb County Fire Rescue within each municipality and do not delineate the roles, responsibilities, and procedures required of each political subdivision as part of the various services delivered (*e.g.*, fire prevention, fire investigations), especially in regard to municipalities that provide overlapping services with the County.

Recommendation 1: The County should consider reviewing and revising the intergovernmental agreements with local municipalities, as well as establishing new intergovernmental agreements, that provide clarity on the role of each political subdivision in the delivery of fire rescue services. The agreements should delineate when County resources are utilized, when municipal resources are utilized, and when overlap may be requested or required. The County should further consider whether the intergovernmental agreements should include chargeback provisions in order to recoup some costs of services delivered to municipalities.

Observation 2: The Department has grown its in-house emergency medical services delivery in the last five years, in addition to continuing to use American Medical Response to deliver medical and pre-hospital ambulatory services. Before the Department continues to allocate resources to its provision of emergency medical services, the Department needs direction from County leadership on the future of emergency medical services delivery in DeKalb County.

Recommendation 2: County leadership should work with Department leadership to explore the options available for emergency medical services delivery and provide guidance on the direction service delivery in DeKalb County should take moving forward.

Observation 3: The Department has reassigned a Public Education Specialist position to support the Public Information Officer as a social media manager. Management of social media has become a highly specialized field of expertise and could be better provided by a position that is classified for social media management and requires relevant experience.

Recommendation 3: The Department should consider establishing a Digital & Social Media Manager position to support the Public Information Officer instead of assigning a Public Education Specialist to serve in a social media manager role.

Observation 4: The Administrative Assistant position supporting the Fire Chief performs duties above and beyond the job description of the Administrative Assistant classification. When the Department eventually has to replace the current Administrative Assistant, the Department will need to re-classify the position in order to accurately address the gaps in support services required of that position.

Recommendation 4: DeKalb County Fire Rescue should consider working with the HR Department to reclassify the Administrative Assistant position supporting the Fire Chief to a classification more appropriate for the requirements and responsibilities of the role.

Observation 5: Sworn employees of the Department have received a series of raises directed for public safety employees. Civilian employees of the Department, including those who perform the same or similar roles as certain sworn employees, did not receive the public safety raises.

Recommendation 5: Department leadership should work with County leadership to determine if civilian employees can be eligible for raises alongside sworn employees in the event DeKalb County Fire Rescue receives future public safety raises.

Observation 6: Three employees report to the Department's Fiscal Officer – two of which are classified as Fiscal Officer Assistants and one of which is classified as a Requisition Technician. The difference in classifications limits the Fiscal Officer's ability to evenly distribute work and cross train employees.

Recommendation 6: DeKalb County Fire Rescue should consider working with the HR Department to reclassify the three Fiscal Office support positions to the same classification.

Observation 7: The Department applies for and receives a significant number of grants without a comprehensive grant strategy or grant management process.

Recommendation 7: The Department should consider establishing a Grant Manager position who reports to either the Fiscal Officer or the Chief of Staff. The Grant Manager position should be utilized to develop a comprehensive grant strategy and grant management process.

Observation 8: Most sworn administrative roles are classified as 40-hour versions of field personnel positions (*e.g.*, Battalion Chief, Captain, Driver/Operator) and so do not have separate job descriptions. As a result, duties and supervisory assignments delegated to sworn personnel in administrative positions are often fluid.

Recommendation 8: The Department should consider developing internal functional job descriptions for sworn administrative roles to provide clarity on duties, responsibilities, and supervisory assignments. The Department should try to limit fluidity in roles, aligning duties and responsibilities with specific roles rather than specific employees.

Observation 9: The Facilities unit receives maintenance requests via email and tracks requests and work performed in a spreadsheet.

Recommendation 9: The Department should consider implementing a ticketing or work order system for the Facilities unit. The Department could consider piggybacking off of the system utilized by the Facilities Management Department (Cityworks) in order to improve workflows and efficiencies.

Observation 10: The Fire Investigations Unit operates as a law enforcement agency within a fire department without full insight into the resources and training available to the DeKalb County Police Department. The Unit additionally has a set of certifications and expertise that do not fully align with leadership in DeKalb County Fire Rescue, resulting in conflicting priorities.

Recommendation 10a: The Fire Investigations Unit should consider pursuing certification through the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police. Even if the Unit decides not to pursue certification, the Unit should consider implementing the leading practices in law enforcement proliferated by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police. The Unit should engage Department leadership in the accreditation process and/or implementation of leading law enforcement practices to help Department leadership better understand law enforcement practices and priorities within the context of the fire service.

Recommendation 10b: DeKalb County Fire Rescue leadership should coordinate with DeKalb County Police Department leadership to ensure the Fire Investigations Unit has access to vendor contacts and training resources when the Unit implements resources or technology initially procured by the Police Department.

Observation 11: DeKalb County Fire Rescue staff indicated multiple concerns with inter-departmental processes between DCFR and the Planning & Sustainability Department that occur in the shared system (Infor Public Service Suite, commonly referred to as Hansen).

Recommendation 11: DeKalb County Fire Rescue leadership should meet with Planning & Sustainability Department on at least an annual basis in order to communicate changes in policy and process and ensure departments remain aligned in terms of provision of services. The meetings should include a review of inter-department processes and systems to ensure workflows and functions are operating correctly. In addition to leadership meetings, the Departments should host inter-departmental training with the Planning & Sustainability Department (and Department of Innovation and Technology, as appropriate) on an annual basis, to allow for interaction, networking, and alignment of understanding among down-line employees of the departments.

Observation 12: Many units comprised largely or entirely of civilians do not provide promotional pathways for those civilian staff, including in units for which civilian staff perform the same or similar duties to sworn staff who have promotional pathways.

Recommendation 12: DeKalb County Fire Rescue should consider working with the HR Department to develop promotional pathways for civilian employees. The Department should consider establishing Senior classifications for Fire Inspector Technicians, Building & Fire Plan Examiners, Public Education Specialists, and Payroll/Personnel Specialists, as well as other civilian positions without promotional pathways. In units with sworn supervisory positions, the Department could consider establishing Lead classifications that can provide supervisory positions for civilian employees.

Observation 13: The Health & Safety Officer is responsible for coordinating programs and initiatives that improve the health and safety of each of the Department's employees. However, the role does not have permanent staff support.

Recommendation 13: The Department should consider assigning a civilian employee support role to the Health & Safety Officer to assist with coordination of programs and initiatives aimed at improving the health and safety of each of the Department's employees.

Observation 14: The Department's Fire Academy facilities are at risk of becoming outdated, with several reaching or beyond the permissible lifetime for certain training purposes (e.g., live fire training). The roadway is cracked, resulting in the potential for injury by recruits and Firefighters, and the relocation of driver training to a former parking lot that is shared by the Sanitation Department and most likely not constructed for large vehicles.

Recommendation 14: The Department should consider conducting a facility condition assessment of the Fire Academy, and should consider investing in short-term and long-term updates to the Fire Academies facilities and resources. The Department could consider a multi-story modular training structure, updates to the seven-story tower and connected facilities (e.g., kitchen used by recruits), and/or a replacement of the current roadway with a cement pad constructed for regular use by fire apparatus.

Observation 15: The Department initiates a new recruit class approximately every 10 to 12 weeks. While the process is positive for recruitment and attempting to limit vacancies, staff have expressed concerns that the pace is not sustainable, and the frequency is resulting in non-quality hires.

Recommendation 15: The Department should regularly review its recruitment process, including the frequency of initiating recruit classes. Department leadership should determine how best DeKalb County Fire Rescue should balance keeping vacancy rates low with investing additional time into the evaluation of candidates and training of recruits. The Department could consider reviewing data on recruit class retention to help evaluate whether the condensed schedule is impacting retention and/or appropriateness of new hires.

Observation 16: The Department purchased timeclocks for use by non-exempt 40-hour employees. However, many employees still submit timesheets to the Payroll Services Office instead of using the timeclocks.

Recommendation 16: Department leadership should enforce the use of timeclocks by non-exempt 40-hour employees. Employees who can't use the timeclocks should be responsible for entry of their timesheets into CV360.

Observation 17: The Department's Payroll/Personnel Assistants are each responsible for at least 174 53-hour employees, as well as a number of 40-hour employees, but are classified the same as Payroll/Personnel Assistants in departments with fewer employees. No other departments have 53-hour employees.

Recommendation 17: DeKalb County Fire Rescue should consider working with the HR Department to re-classify the DCFR Payroll/Personnel Assistants to reflect the difference in workload and responsibility level between DCFR and other departments.

Observation 18: The Department has developed a plan for replacing stations and building new stations utilizing SPLOST funding. However, the Department has not identified funding opportunities for improvements of stations not slated for replacement, as well as funding sources for station replacements and construction in the event SPLOST funding is not consistently available in the future.

Recommendation 18: DeKalb County Fire Rescue should work with the Facilities Maintenance Department to develop a long-range capital improvement plan and should reserve a percentage of its annual budget for future capital improvements, similar to the vehicle replacement plan. The Department could additionally research alternative methods of funding capital improvements.

Observation 19: The Department's headquarters and Fire Academy present a series of safety and security risks, both for Department employees and for members of the public.

Recommendation 19: The Department should conduct a security audit of its headquarters and Fire Academy. The Department should work with the Facilities Maintenance Department and County leadership to identify funding and encourage buy-in to correct issues noted during the security audit.

Observation 20: The Department has identified retention as one of the primary strategic priorities and greatest challenges for DeKalb County Fire Rescue. Staff indicated that turnover and employee dissatisfaction stem from the perception of lower salaries than neighboring fire departments, compression of salaries within each salary grade, a lack of clarity regarding the future of the County's firefighting pension, and a lack of promotional opportunities for sworn administrative personnel.

Recommendation 20a: The County should review the pay structure for DeKalb County Fire Rescue. Without the provision of merit-based raises on a regular basis, the County should consider reverting to the steps-based pay structure utilized by the County prior to the 2016 Classification & Compensation Study for annual increases in salary paid to DeKalb County Fire Rescue employees.

Recommendation 20b: The County should work to determine the future of its firefighting pension and provide clarity to DeKalb County Fire Rescue employees on the decisions made. If the County cannot make a single determination covering all decision points regarding the pension, the County should still communicate the available information as soon as possible.

Recommendation 20c: The Department should consider promotional pathways for sworn personnel serving in administrative positions that replace a return to field operations as the sole means of promotion.

Observation 21: Changes to policies and standard operating procedures are published in Vector Solutions, with employees required to sign a statement of understanding in the system regarding the changes. However, some staff suggested that not all civilian employees are accessing Vector Solutions, reviewing changes, and signing the statement of understanding, resulting in inconsistent practices.

Recommendation 21: The Department should review the current Vector Solutions-based distribution of changes to policies and standard operating procedures to ensure that all employees, both sworn and civilian, are completing the required statements of understanding and are consist in implementation of practices.

Observation 22: The Department tracks a vast amount of data and publishes numerous reports, which are written for Department staff and industry experts, but do not provide the narrative and context necessary for the general public to fully understand the key takeaways.

Recommendation 22: The Department should review its reports in order to develop better reporting narratives. The Department should determine which metrics and datapoints are most relevant to the audience of each external-facing report and should provide brief context around those metrics and datapoint, avoiding excessive use of technical jargon.

Conclusion

DeKalb County Fire Rescue is a highly strategic department with a general understanding of how leadership wants to provide service delivery in the future. The primary missing piece of the future vision is County leadership's direction for the provision of emergency medical services. The Department has opportunities to work with the County to improve retention efforts and develop a capital improvement program to maintain forward momentum into the future. Participation in the CPSE accreditation process will help the Department further its pattern of continuous improvement, and transition to a fully mature organization that serves as a strategic partner for the rest of the County and neighboring jurisdictions. M&J would like to thank Department leadership for collecting and providing vast amounts of information, and the 67 employees across numerous job levels and functions who participated in interviews, workshops, job shadowing, and facility tours.

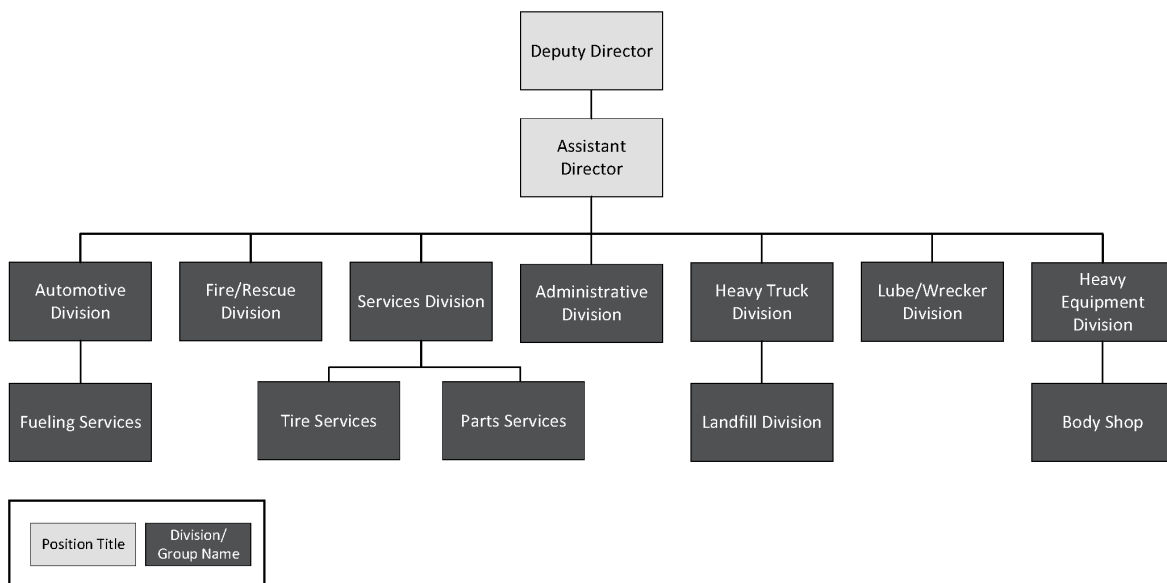
3.1 Fleet

Introduction

Fleet Management (“Department”) is responsible for the acquisition, maintenance, repair, and disposal of all County vehicles and large equipment, which consists of approximately 3,700 vehicles and pieces of equipment. Fleet Management is also responsible for fuel program administration for County vehicles and equipment.

Organization

Fleet Management is a division of the County’s Public Works Department. Fleet Management is organized into maintenance and repair divisions based on the type of vehicle serviced. In addition to the 5 maintenance and repair divisions based on vehicle type, there is an Administrative Division and a Service Division. The Fleet Management Division of Public Works is led by a Deputy Director, who is supported by an Assistant Director, as demonstrated in the following organizational chart.



The Service Division is responsible for tire services for all County vehicles, as well as maintaining the parts shops. Within the Service Division are three shops - a tire shop, and two parts shops. One parts shop is at the same location as the Automotive Division, Fire Rescue Division, and the Lube and Wrecker Division. This location is known as “A Shop.” The other parts shop location is at “B Shop” which houses the Heavy Equipment Division and the Heavy Truck Division. The Service Division is led by a Superintendent, who oversees an administrative assistant and four supervisors: two for the tire shop, and one for each of the two parts shops. Currently, the tire shop has nine tire technicians, and there are a total of nine parts technicians between A Shop and B Shop.

The Automotive Division, led by a Superintendent, is responsible for light vehicles, such as police patrol vehicles, regular trucks, and other standard passenger vehicles. There are three Supervisors who each oversee a team of approximately six technicians to support the maintenance and repair needs of these vehicles. The Automotive Division also houses fueling services, and is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the County's 21 fueling locations, as well as supporting the preparation of recently acquired vehicles, as well as those preparing for disposal. Fueling services is led by a Supervisor and is supported by two technicians.

The Heavy Equipment Division is led by a Superintendent and is responsible for preventive maintenance of repairs of all large equipment, such as asphalt spreaders, excavators, skid steers, and large tractors. The Heavy Equipment shop has a supervisor and six technicians. Within the Heavy Equipment Division is also the Body Shop, responsible for paint and body repair work for vehicles and equipment within the County. Organizationally, both the Heavy Equipment and Body Shops are led by a supervisor who oversee a number of technicians.

The Heavy Truck Division services large vehicles including sanitation trucks, the vehicles of the Roads and Drainage Department, and the Department of Watershed Management. In addition to their location at the B Shop, there are staff located at the Sanitation Department's landfill (Site E), to allow for more on-demand, on-site repair of sanitation's trucks.

The Fire Rescue Division is responsible for service and repair for the County's fire rescue vehicles, ambulances, and other specialty vehicles. The Fire Rescue Division is led by a Superintendent, who oversees two Supervisors. Each Supervisor oversees five technicians. Housed within the Fire Rescue Division is a Fire Rescue Department employee who serves as the fleet liaison, assisting in scheduling and coordinating apparatus coming to Fleet Management for services and repairs.

The Lube and Wrecker Division performs oil changes on all of the County vehicles that require oil changes (electric vehicles, for example, do not require oil changes). The County maintains a free-standing lube shop that can service up to three light vehicles simultaneously, as well as reserving a lane for larger or heavier vehicles. This Division also has four wreckers that can be used to tow County vehicles to the appropriate shop for service. This Division is led by a Superintendent, who oversees the Supervisor responsible for overseeing the technicians.

The Administrative Division is responsible for personnel, accounting, fuel administration, vehicle acquisitions and surplus coordination, and other administrative duties to support Fleet Management. There are two parts expeditors, who assist in researching and ordering the needed parts and coordinating with the receiving parts room. There are two Accounting Technicians who process invoices daily on behalf of Fleet Management. There can be upwards of 50 invoices a day, given the volume of parts and materials being ordered. Given the nature of parts pricing variance, this often includes requesting change orders for price variances, and coordinating with the Finance Department to ensure that the shipping is entered as a separate line during the payment process.

Accounting Technicians are also responsible for monthly statement reconciliation, and assisting the parts room, vendors, and division supervisors in reconciling any issues related to ordering, receipt of ordered goods, and vendor payments. There are two Senior Accounting Technicians who assist with all of the same types of duties as the Accounting Technicians in addition to the monthly billing preparation for charging the end-user departments, reviewing work orders for completeness and accuracy, monitoring the disbursement of fuel and certified natural gas, and reviewing fuel prices to ensure that the end-user department charges are based on the correct five-day average. One Senior Accounting Technician is also in charge of the fuel key program, entering new fuel keys into the system, as well as tracking use, discrepancies, and cutting of the fuel keys for non-compliance with preventive maintenance timeliness.

Staffing Analysis

The Fleet Management Division also participates in apprenticeship programs with Georgia Piedmont Technical College (“GPTC”) and, in the past, an internship program with Warren Technical School, to provide opportunities for students still in school and recently completed to rotate through the different service divisions to learn more about the types of work performed by DeKalb County. Many of the GPTC apprentices are offered full-time employment at the conclusion of their apprenticeship period.

The Department has had hiring challenges, but has been trying a number of methods to increase the pool of qualified candidates. They have used banners on shops, stickers on vehicles, posting on indeed.com in addition to the County website, and are also participating in career fairs and school career days, to raise awareness of these critical positions.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

Fleet Management’s mission is to “Keep DeKalb Rolling” and this is communicated in print across all of its locations, through its internal onboarding process, and through the development of Department goals.

Fleet Management has adopted a strategy of continuous improvement, regularly reviewing current operations and looking for minor tweaks or updates to improve efficiency and effective operations. The Service Division, for example, recaps tires to save money and extend useful life, sells old rims and outdated inventory back to vendors or through auction, and the Body Shop will leverage the surplus yard to reuse undamaged body elements, rather than ordering new and losing time while waiting for delivery. The County possesses approximately 375 natural gas vehicles (approximately 12% of the County’s fleet), 126 electric vehicles with electric vehicle chargers on County properties, and has been awarded a number of division and individual recognitions in the last 10 years.

For additional cost savings and efficiencies, as appropriate, the Department utilizes contracts with outside repair, or OSR, to assist with complex or time-consuming repairs, or where the skills may not be present in the County technicians or where the time the repair will take would hold up a bay that could otherwise be used for multiple services.

Fleet Management also strives to leverage vehicle warranties as much as possible; the County’s average length of ownership for a standard personal vehicle coincides with the vehicle warranty period, and aligns with industry standards.

Fuel Management

The County maintains 21 fueling stations currently. Fleet Management uses the Fuelmaster system to distribute fuel keys with unique vehicle codes, that allow each vehicle operator to refuel their vehicle at the most appropriate or convenient location. Fuel level and tank operability are monitored through the Veeder-Root system, an automated tank gauge fuel management system, automatically sending alerts for low fuel levels and any issues with the equipment, such as leaks. The County also maintains agreements with several smaller municipalities within the County, that allow those municipalities to use the fuel sites. The Administrative Division sends invoices to these municipalities monthly for their fuel consumption, and performs Fuel Use audits on County users. End users are required to enter their mileage at each refueling; there is inconsistent compliance in reporting accurate information, as end-users have learned that an entry of 000000 is accepted by the system, which results in inaccurate tracking of mileage associated with preventive maintenance schedules and may lead to vehicles being overdue for preventive maintenance. An Accounting Technician is responsible for Fuel Use audits, and reconciling and correcting inaccurate entries.

The Administrative Division is also responsible for providing users who may travel outside of the County with fuel cards to allow them to obtain fuel while traveling to conferences, or on other County business. Users who are provided with a fuel card are required to bring back copies of receipts for fuel, to allow for reconciliation of monthly use to the end-user department for billing. For departments that do not have vehicles and need to travel, the Administrative Division also can provide a vehicle on loan for the duration of the trip.

Asset Management

Fleet Management uses FASTER as its asset management solution. Fleet Management recently transitioned from an on-premises solution to a cloud-based version of FASTER. Even with this transition, some of the shops are still using paper-based work ordering printing, updates, and tracking of time. As part of the transition to cloud-based FASTER, the Parts Shops lost the ability to use their old handheld scanners for cycle counts and inventory review. Currently, all cycle counts are performed manually.

Preventive maintenance work is tracked for most vehicles based on the number of miles recorded during regular refueling. The Department uses 3,500 miles as the standard mileage between oil changes. For vehicles that may have limited miles but still have regular use, Fleet Management tracks their preventive maintenance using a calendar schedule.

Monthly (and for some types of units, weekly), end-user department liaisons are sent reminders of which units are due (and overdue) for preventive maintenance service. If a vehicle lags significantly beyond its scheduled preventive maintenance, Fleet Management may cut off that vehicle's access to the County's fueling sites.

Each technician is expected to use FASTER to record each unit they work on, recording the type of work performed, the amount of time spent on the work, and any parts or materials used in performing the work. There can be some challenges with this expectation, as technicians must use the FASTER system to log into each vehicle as they work on it, and must log when they may switch from a preventive maintenance to each repair task on each vehicle, to allow them to request parts and materials associated with that repair task.

Additionally, end-users often drive up and ask for quick assistance in resolving a minor issue (headlight bulb change, for example) which can be performed quicker than it would take to log into the system to record the vehicle, the work being performed, and the parts needed. Supervisors are expected to review the work each day to ensure each technician has a complete and accurate recording of their work performed. If the technicians need to request parts from the parts shop, many can request the part through FASTER from their bay, and receive an email from the Parts Technician when the requested parts are ready for pickup. All work orders are reviewed to ensure completeness and accuracy.

Many of the divisions also offer road technicians, where a technician from the unit's designated shop (or tire shop, as appropriate) can come to their location to perform needed minor services and repairs. The Body Shop also offers field estimates for needed body work.

The Parts Division shops perform daily cycle counts and strives to maintain 100% of in-stock availability for parts needed for scheduled preventive maintenance.

The annual fees charged to end-user departments help fund a Vehicle Replacement Plan ("VRP"). Tracked within FASTER the VRP tracks the age, mileage, and dollars spent on all County vehicles entered within the fleet. Annually, the Deputy Director runs a report that makes recommendations on replacement. The Deputy Director reviews this report to determine what will be recommended for replacement using the annual replacement budget. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, this assessment included meetings with the end-user departments. These meetings have not been reinstated. In addition to the VRP, the County maintains an annual budget of approximately \$1.5 million in early replacement funds, which covers the costs of vehicles that may need to be replaced due to accidents, significant repair costs that exceed the useful life or value of the vehicle, or other unanticipated replacement needs.

As units are nearing the end of their useful life, or if there is repair work needed that may result in a vehicle being taken out of active service, it may become a challenge for Fleet Management to get users to bring those vehicles in for preventive maintenance or repairs, as users do not want to lose access to a vehicle.

If a department requests to add a new position, or reclassify a position to one that would require a vehicle, that department is responsible for also requesting the funds necessary to purchase the new vehicle for that position. Fleet Management assists with the purchase process once the budget has been confirmed. Currently there is no formal process for OMB or the end-user departments to contact Fleet Management to verify the current cost and lead-time for vehicles, including any time for customization and part installation. If a department obtains vehicles independent of Fleet Management (typically using grant funds or the acquisition of confiscated vehicles), the department must apply for the vehicle to be added to the County's fleet, which is what makes the vehicle eligible for maintenance and repair within the County's shops. The Deputy Director reviews these requests and determines whether or not a vehicle is eligible for addition to the County's fleet. These vehicles are not part of the VRP, and therefore not eligible for replacement.

There are somewhat haphazard processes related to the acquisition of new makes and models into the fleet. For Heavy Equipment, Heavy Truck, and Fire Rescue, the shop may help develop the specifications, and typically receive the specification sheet and can review to determine what may be needed to support that unit, or if there is a significant variance from prior or current units. The Parts Division also receives notice of new specifications. Processes for ordering new parts vary, as there may be a lag between order time and order delivery, which can cause issues when fleet vehicles arrive for service and needed parts are not onsite. Additionally, vehicles that are used by undercover officers are not standard fleet vehicles and the needed parts may not be “on contract” as part of the larger fleet maintenance contracts, so work-around mechanisms have been developed to ensure that the parts and services are available for those vehicles.

While the specifications and details of new vehicle types is made available, ability to have hands-on access to the new vehicle for training and general familiarity is not a standard offering.

The Department also prepares all of its own vehicles for surplus and auction. An Automotive Supervisor and assigned technician assist in cleaning out the vehicles, removing decals, verifying the titles and VIN, and transferring the units to the surplus yard. All auctioned vehicles are submitted to the Board of Commissioners for approval prior to the auction.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

Fleet Management maintains a number of protocols as well as comprehensive policy expectations. The reviewed documentation appears to comport to current practices. The effective date and last revision date on a number of policies, however, is more than 10 years old.

As many of the roles within Fleet Management cannot be taught through review of procedures manuals or process documents, a significant portion of the responsibilities are learned “on the job”. Other technicians within the newer employee’s shop often take on the responsibility to assist the newer employees, and serve as a reference and resource for other employees. This is not a titled position, but many shops have a lead technician who assists in answering questions and troubleshooting.

For the Administrative Division, there are a number of step-by-step instruction manuals that have been created over the past few years. The Administrative Division is working to get all of these guides updated with the new requirements and steps in CV360, the County’s new financial system.

The technicians in each shop also have access to a number of schematics for County-owned vehicles and equipment, which allow them to research and diagnose issues, and help identify what parts and materials may be necessary for the service or repair. Fleet Management often incorporates training in the order specifications for new or replacement vehicles. In Fire Rescue, for example, a recent new order included the ability for technicians to travel to the manufacturer’s factory to see the building of similar vehicles, and receive nearly a week of classes on the maintenance and repair needs for the ordered vehicle.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

The Department does not currently do any performance reporting back to County leadership. Within Fleet Management, there are a number of metrics that are tracked to assess their performance and responsiveness to the needs of the County. Throughout the assessment process, Fleet Management employees at multiple levels of the organization spoke of the four core goals of the department. Summarized, they are: efficiency, customer service, accountability, and policy adherence. Each goal has a number of objectives, which then tie into the seven KPIs identified by Fleet Management:

- In-Service Rate/Out-of-Service Rate (95% or greater)
- Monitor PM Compliance (95% or greater)
- Monitor Customer Service Satisfaction
- Parts Inventory Audits
- Quality Control
- Staff Development
- Monthly Training Report

Fleet Management sets an expectation that a minimum of 95% of the County's fleet should be available and ready to perform at any given time. To monitor this goal, the Department runs what are known as daily "down reports" which report, for each maintenance division, which vehicles or equipment are out of service, the status of the service, and whether or not an external vendor has been assigned the repair. These reports are run daily and provided to Department leadership, and each division must provide notes on what may be keeping them from completing the repair or maintenance and activating the unit. Supervisors are also reviewing the cost analysis for the use of OSRs, to make sure that their determination to send a unit for outside service or repair is still a cost and/or time-effective model.

Each division has goals related to timeliness of completing preventive maintenance. The goal is that all preventive maintenance for standard passenger vehicles is performed with seven days of end-user department notification of the need for the service. For services that go more than 30 days of notice without being completed, the Deputy Director may send additional reminders and, as necessary, cut off the fuel key to restrict the end-user's access to fuel until they have brought the unit in for service.

Each division tries to maintain approximately 90% productivity from each technician each day, which means that 90% of their time is spent actively performing maintenance or repair work. The system also tracks metrics for the average and budgeted time for each preventive maintenance service, so supervisors can review to ensure actual time worked generally conforms with these standards. Supervisors and Superintendents may also schedule training, such as vendor training on a new unit type or piece of equipment within the stop, in addition to the required County employee training.

Shops will also track the number or percent of the preventive maintenance work orders that are completed on time.

Fleet Management also has QR codes available in the shops for customer satisfaction surveys. The Administrative Support Manager pulls the survey responses monthly and reviews for any dissatisfied customers, so that Fleet Management can address any areas of concern, or where they failed to meet customer expectations.

In addition to the metrics tracked by the Department, there are other KPIs which may provide valuable data and insight to the Department and the County. One data point either not tracked or, at least, not provided to Mauldin & Jenkins in the dataset is the number of preventive maintenance work orders that lead to repairs. The Division could use this data to identify how often end-users are having issues with their vehicles but are not bringing those issues to the awareness of the Fleet Management Division or their own department's Fleet liaison. More robust and consistent tracking of cost per work order, or cost per service type (preventive maintenance, brake service, etc.) would also allow the Department to better understand, by both service type and unit type, the average costs or repairs, or potentially identify changing trends in the frequency or types of repairs needed for certain unit types. This type of data could prove valuable when assessing VRP needs, or forecasting for the average length of time-in-service.

Fleet Management could also consider more consistent and formal tracking of amount of fuel distributed per fuel site to assist in identifying areas of the County where additional fuel sites may be needed, or considering ending the use of under-utilized sites.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

Employees at varying levels of the organization could, often unprompted, speak to the mission and goals of the Department, stating the mission of "We Keep DeKalb Rolling", and could identify how their role directly contributed to the Department and County's ability to stay operational. Management within all divisions spoke to how their division contributed to the four goals of Fleet Management, and Department employees take pride in their work and how their work directly contributes to the continued operations of the County, especially during periods of inclement weather or other factors that may shut down other parts of County operations.

Department leadership works to try and communicate County and Departmental changes throughout all of the shops. As many employees do not have County email addresses, printed copies of memos, policy changes, and announcements, are posted on job boards within the shops, and Supervisors/Superintendents may also use meetings at the beginning or end of shifts to communicate or reiterate important points. For certain types of information, the Assistant Director and/or internal human resources staff may visit each shop to discuss changes, upcoming open enrollment dates or deadlines, or other important information.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

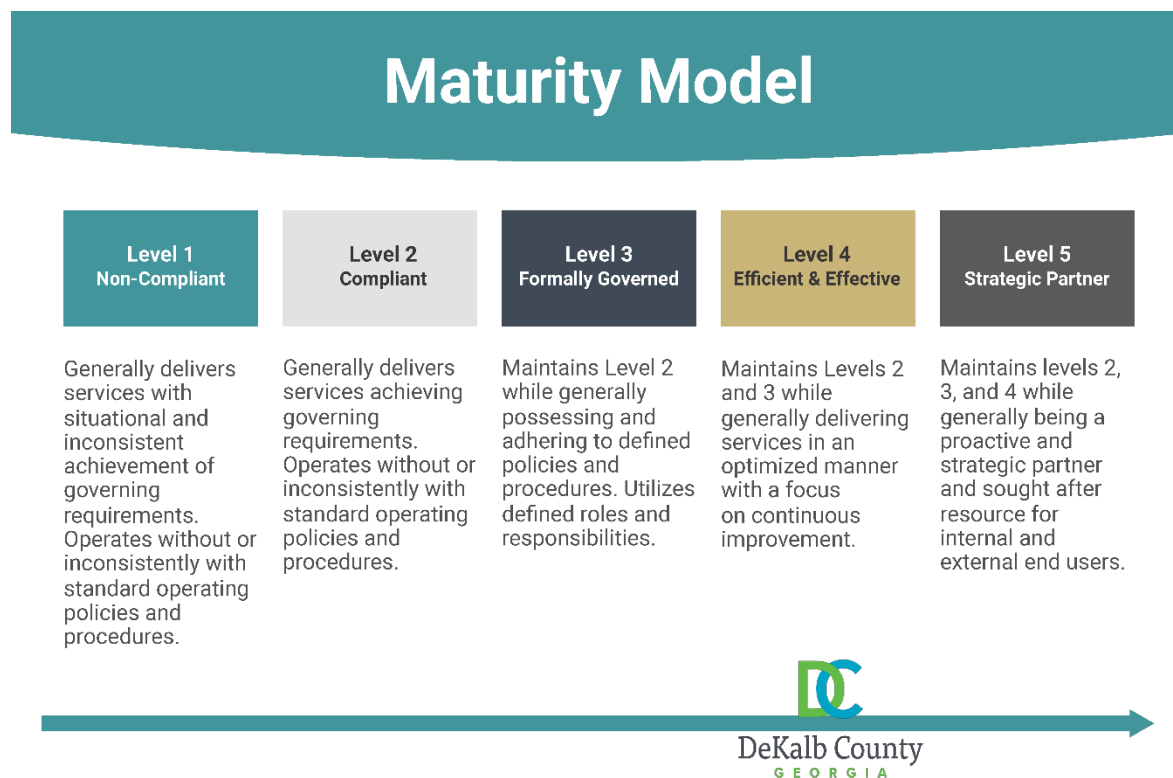
The Department has frequently placed in the top 10 of 100 Best Fleets, as recognized by NAFA, ranking #1 in 2019

The Department has received a 100% inventory count for over ten years, an indication of strong inventory management procedures and accountability.

The Deputy Director of Fleet Management was honored as the American Public Works Association (APWA) Fleet Professional of the Year in 2023. In 2022, Fleet Management was recognized by Natural Gas Vehicles for America, a trade association dedicated to promoting natural gas as a transportation fuel. That same year Clean Cities Georgia recognized Fleet Management as an Alternative Fuel Leader. As of M&J's fieldwork, Fleet Management is also nominated for several awards for this year, with announcements to be made after the conclusion of M&J's fieldwork.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 4: Efficient and Effective.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: Fleet Management often has challenges hiring technicians through open hiring and recruiting, especially hiring technicians with diesel mechanic experience, or experience working on heavy trucks and equipment. Additionally, competition with the larger industry (dealerships, manufacturers, warranty servicers, etc.) makes retention challenging as well.

Recommendation 1: The County should work with the selected vendor for the Classification and Compensation Study to consider benchmarking technicians/mechanics against comparable private sector positions. This broadened benchmarking will provide the County with additional market industry data, and may allow Fleet Management to enhance its marketing to and targeting of workers, as well as consider compensation and incentive structures more competitive with the broader market for these employees.

Observation 2: In the upgrade of the FASTER asset management system, Fleet Management's handheld scanners were no longer compatible. Handheld scanners were used in the parts rooms to track and count inventory as part of daily cycle count processes. Currently, these cycle counts are being performed manually, with printed inventory counts to review and verify.

Recommendation 2: Now that Fleet Management has implemented the cloud-based FASTER asset management system, the Department should prioritize working with DOIT to identify a handheld scanner platform that integrates with FASTER, to allow for the use of handheld scanners in cycle counts. Handheld scanners may assist in improving the efficiency of the daily cycle counts. Haphazard use of manual cycle counts may still serve as a valuable review control to ensure attention to detail during cycle counts, but should not be used as the daily standard when scanner technology is available.

Observation 3: Technicians either have to use paper-based work order tracking, or pause their work and go to a computer bay each time they need make notes on repairs, switch tasks, order parts, or switch units.

Recommendation 3: Fleet Management should assess whether or not shops would be interested in the deployment of tablets to allow for more real-time use of FASTER. Fleet Management may also want to determine if FASTER is capable of supporting audio dictation of work order notes, to support those who may be less proficient or familiar with technology.

Observation 4: Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the development of the VRP recommendations was a collaborative process between the end-user department and Fleet Management, typically reviewed and discussed during a meeting.

Recommendation 4: Fleet Management should reintroduce collaborative input for each department’s annual VRP review and recommendation process. Fleet Management should coordinate with DOIT to develop a process or workflow that would allow for Fleet Management to upload unit information into a workflow, send the list of recommended vehicles for replacement to the end-user department, and allow them to add comments, upload documents and supporting justification, and request consideration of units that may not have been part of the Fleet Management recommendation.

Observation 5: Currently if a DeKalb County department requests budget for a new or reclassified position that typically has an assigned vehicle, Fleet Management is not involved in the budgeting process, nor do all departments understand that additional funding must be requested to cover the purchase of the new fleet vehicle.

Recommendation 5: Fleet Management should work with the Office of Management and Budget to ensure that budget reviews include a review to determine if a position request has included the appropriate additional funds for vehicles and associated equipment, and not just the personnel component of the request. Each year, Fleet Management should provide an up-to-date list of anticipated cost of common new vehicles, as well as estimated delivery timeframe and any additional costs or timeline for installation of additional equipment.

Observation 6: Fleet Management has a number of policies, processes, and procedures documenting operating conditions and expectations. Fleet Management follows leading practice of recording both an effective date and a last revised date. Many of these dates, however, are more than five years old. While many of these policies likely have not needed any additional changes in recent years, the current data captured doesn’t reflect timely review for potential updates or revisions.

Recommendation 6: Fleet Management may want to consider adding a data point to policy documents reflecting the last review date, in addition to the effective date and last revision date. Fleet Management should also consider leveraging change logs to capture effective and change dates, while leaving the “last review date” as part of the published policy.

Observation 7: Often times more experienced or tenured staff serve in a lead or training role for newer technicians. This is not a formal role, and there is no additional compensation provided for this work.

Recommendation 7: Fleet Management should collaborate with Human Resources to determine if it would be viable to introduce a “Lead Technician” role, who serves to help manage workload and productivity in the shop, serves as a training lead, and provides troubleshooting assistance on difficult repairs.

Conclusion

The Fleet Management Division is operating efficiently in many ways, and uses a model of continuous improvement to “Keep DeKalb Rolling.” Fleet Management has implemented a number of leading practices, and is considered an industry leader in the green energy space.

The Division faces challenges with recruitment, and given the tenure of many key employees, and County and Division leadership should continue to identify methods for recruitment and alternative staffing models, such as apprenticeships.

We are confident that current Division efforts, along with the recommendations contained in this report, will continue to position the Division for success. We would like to thank Department leadership for their time and resources, and assistance in coordinating interviews with 30 individuals, and facility tours across multiple locations.

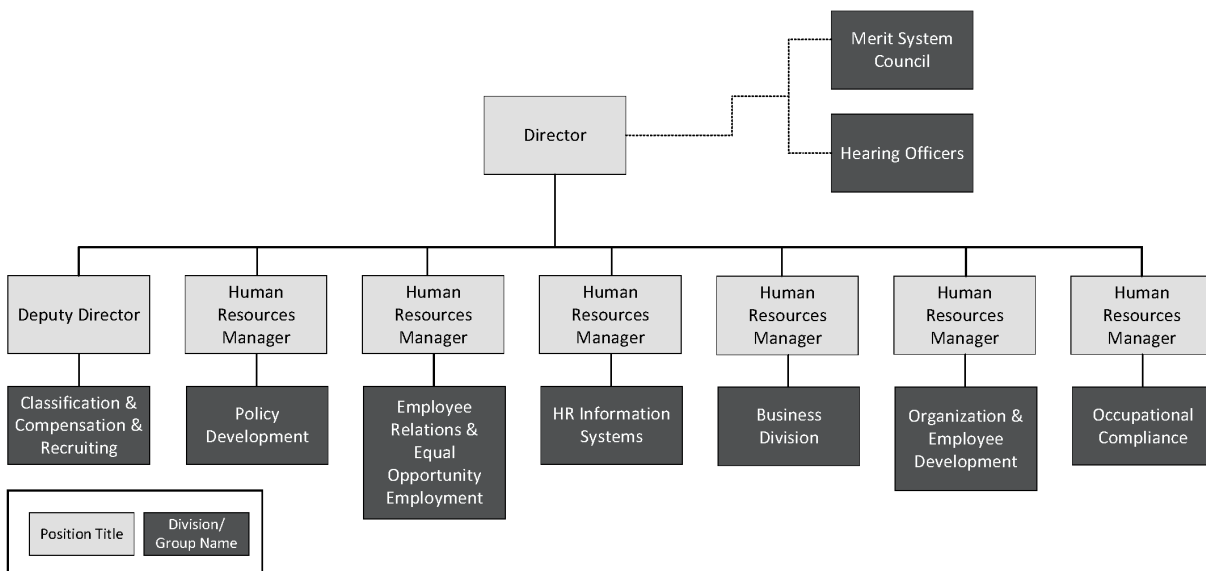
3.J Human Resources & Merit System

Introduction

The DeKalb County Human Resources & Merit System Department (“Department”) has the mission of building a diverse, professional, and motivated workforce by offering competitive compensation; ongoing training and development; and fair, consistent application of policies and procedures.

Organization

The Department is led by the Human Resources & Merit System Director (“Director”). The Department has nine primary functions. The Department is comprised of seven divisions, with one led by a Deputy Director and the remaining six led by HR Managers. The seven department heads (Deputy Director and six HR Managers) report to the Director. There is also an Administrative Assistant position that reports to the Director. Additionally, Department utilizes the Merit System Council and Hearing Officers. The following organizational chart depicts the structure of the Department and its functions:



The nine primary divisions are as follows:

- Classification & Compensation & Recruiting Division
- Policy Development Division
- Employee Relations & Equal Employment Opportunity Division
- Human Resources Information Systems Division
- Business Division
- Organization & Employee Development Division
- Occupational Compliance Division
- Merit System Council
- Hearing Officers

Policy Development Division

The Policy Development Division (“Division”) is led by a Human Resources Manager who is supported by a Management Analyst. The Division is responsible for reviewing and revising existing Department policies, as well as developing new policies, in response to state or federal legislation. The Division also performs exit interviews to gather feedback on policies and retention strategies, along with stay interviews of current employees in high-turnover departments.

Employee Relations & Equal Employment Opportunity Division

The Employee Relations & Equal Employment Opportunity Division (“Division”) is led by a Human Resources Manager who is supported by three employees. The Division is responsible for mediating and resolving conflicts between management and employees. This mediation includes holding hearings for employees to appeal terminations, suspensions, demotions, and adverse disciplinary action. The Division also responds to formal employee grievances regarding policy violations, and formal employee complaints of discrimination under Title VII, the Americans with Disabilities Act, sexual harassment, or any other applicable state or federal ordinance.

This Division is staffed by a Management Analyst II, Employee Relations Analyst, and a Human Resources Specialist. All three positions report directly to the HR Manager.

Human Resources Information Systems Division

The Human Resources Information Systems (“HRIS”) Division (“Division”) is led by a Human Resources Manager who is supported by five employees. The Division is responsible for maintaining information systems and databases that track employee data, applications, onboarding processes, and payroll.

The Division assists in maintaining the operational usage of the County’s Human Capital Management application called CloudVergent360 (“CV360”) – the Department of Innovation and Technology also assists in maintaining the functionality of the CV360. The tool is a County-specific implementation of Oracle Human Capital Management Cloud, a cloud-based software application for Human Resources departments. CV360 serves as a central hub for County employees to have a self-service portal for their payroll, benefits, and Human Resources-related processes. The Division maintains the database of job classifications and positions, making changes or adding items as requested by the Classification & Compensation & Recruiting Division.

The Division also reviews, validates, and enters changes to employee data regarding new hires, transfers, promotions, reclassifications, and employee terminations. The Division also reviews and approves or denies leave requests for the Family and Medical Leave Act and requests for leave donations. The processing of I-9 forms for new hires, and the entry of I-9 data into federal E-Verify systems, is also the responsibility of the Division.

The Division is staffed by a Management Analyst III, HRIS Specialist, HRIS Analyst, Human Resources Specialist, and a Senior Human Resources Specialist. All five positions report to the HR Manager.

Business Division

The Business Division (“Division”) is led by a Human Resources Manager who is supported by six employees. The Division maintains Department personnel records (which includes employee-specific information such as County job history, special recognitions, and any personnel actions), and responds to Open Records Requests in compliance with the Georgia Records Act. The Department is required to maintain records and respond to all records requests, except for those exempt from disclosure through court order or state bylaw, per Georgia Code O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70. Personnel records that must be maintained, and the schedule for how long they must be maintained, are outlined in Georgia Code O.C.G.A. § 50-18-90.

The Division is also responsible for engaging with temporary employees brought in to meet high demand, short-term staffing for County departments. Division personnel also write intranet procedures for use by all departments in the County, support employee onboarding efforts, help new hires obtain employee ID badges, and process unemployment insurance claims.

The Division is staffed by a Management Analyst III, a Management Analyst I, two Human Resources Specialists, one Senior Human Resources Specialist, and one Records Technician. All Division employees report to the Division Manager. One of the two Human Resources Specialist positions dual reports to the Human Resources Manager and the Classification & Compensation & Recruiting Division Deputy Director. Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Division included one additional position for receptionist duties for the front desk of the Department’s office. During/after the COVID-19 Pandemic and hybrid work arrangements were established, the Department’s office did not receive as many visitors and therefore the position was eliminated. Currently, the position responsible for the employee ID badges is also responsible for receptionist duties for the office front desk.

Organization & Employee Development Division

The Organization & Employee Development Division (“Division”) is led by a Human Resources Manager who is supported by four employees. The Division is responsible for supporting the County’s strategic priority of “Investing in Employees”. Training resources and programs for both new hires and current employees who wish to augment their skillset, are administered by the Division. Division personnel create and revise learning modules within CloudVergent360 (“CV360”) and handle employee enrollment and scheduling for training courses.

The Division also runs the County’s Bright Future Leadership Development Program (“BFLDP”), a ten-session program intended to prepare employees for higher-level leadership opportunities in County government. Division staff process applications to the program, plan logistics, perform orientation, and administer the program itself. The Division also administers two annual employee recognition programs, the Star Award and the Milestone Service Award. The Star Award recognizes employees who exceed expectations in performance of their duties, and the Milestone Service Award is a series of escalating recognition and awards for every five years an individual has served in County government.

Additionally, the Division also manages the formal registration of Department vendors who do business with the County, participate in any County performance management processes, and process applications for tuition reimbursement from County employees. The County offers tuition reimbursement for associate, bachelor, and advanced degrees to employees based on grades earned. County department directors must allocate or designate department funding to cover the costs of any eligible tuition reimbursements, and the application or acceptance of this program is inconsistent across County departments.

The Division is staffed by two Employee Development Trainers, an Employee Engagement Specialist, and a Human Resources Specialist. All four employees report to the Division Manager.

County departments expressed concerns regarding managerial training material being overly generic and not adequately situational or applicable dependent on County departments' work environment. Furthermore, customer service training has been described as not meeting department's needs.

There are inconsistencies related to certification and training processes within County departments. Training and certification functions appear to be driven by individual departments regarding which courses can be taken and paid for as departments must decide how much of their budgets to allocate for training purposes. As observed within the HR Department, not all County departments are currently participating in programs such as the tuition reimbursement program. Therefore, there are inconsistencies regarding which training opportunities are available to County departments.

Related to the performance appraisal process, staff expressed desires for a 360 evaluation process in which staff can assess team members such as peers and direct managers/supervisors.

Occupational Compliance Division

The Occupational Compliance Division ("Division") is led by a Human Resources Manager who is supported by a Senior Human Resources Specialist. The Division oversees the facilitation of physicals and psychological assessments of sworn County personnel. Any County processes related to employee drug use including drug screenings, positive test protocols, fitness-for-duty evaluations, and return-to-duty screening procedures are administered by the Division. Additionally, the Division supports employees who need recertification for commercial driver's licenses or fire and rescue certifications.

Merit System Council

The Merit System Council ("Council") is composed of five County citizens, appointed by the CEO and confirmed by the Board of Commissioners, to serve on a staggered basis, for five-year terms. The Council is led by a chairman and vice-chairman, both elected by the Council. It is the stated function of the Council to represent the interest of the public in the improvement of personnel administration and selection of qualified personnel. The Council also reviews appeals pertaining to disciplinary actions of permanent classified employees for cause. The Council can hold public hearings regarding proposed rules, regulations, or standards of the County's Merit System. The Council can recommend the adoption of rules, regulations, or standards to the County, but Council recommendations are subject to review and approval by the County Board of Commissioners.

Hearing Officers

Hearing Officers are responsible for convening disciplinary appeal hearings to afford aggrieved employees opportunity to fully explain conduct for which discipline was administered (demotion, suspension, or termination). Hearing Officers may reverse disciplinary actions only upon finding error in fact, or non-job-related factor. Hearing Officers render written decisions containing findings of fact, conclusions, and a basis for decision within 20 days of hearings. The Department may maintain up to 10 Hearing Officers.

Staffing Analysis

The Department has had industry average turnover from January 2020 to January 2025. The table below depicts the turnover rate for each year in the reviewed period.

Year	Turnover Rate
2020	2.78%
2021	13.70%
2022	15.58%
2023	14.12%
2024	20.45%

Source: Department-provided staffing data

The average turnover rate for a municipal Human Resources department is between 15% and 20%. The Department was within or lower than this range for four of the years in the reviewed period. Turnover in 2020 was particularly low, with only one departure. In 2024, the Department saw higher than average turnover with nine departures. Of the employees who departed their position within the reviewed period, the average tenure in the Department was 1,410 days (3.86 years). Of the current employees as of January 2025, the average tenure in the Department is 2,486 days (6.8 years). The average headcount within the reviewed period is 39.5 employees. As of January 2025, the Department has 43 positions filled and four positions vacant.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

Strategic Plan

The Department maintains a Strategic Plan ("Plan") for 2021-2024. The Plan outlines how the Department supports the County's strategic priorities and other projects in the following areas:

- Financial Stability/Good Government
- Public Safety
- Retention, Hiring, and Training
- Customer-Focused Service Delivery
- Community Health and Well-being
- Ensure Consistency, Fairness, and Transparency in Policy Implementation
- Develop and Maintain a Robust, Motivated, and Engaged Team of HR Professionals

Within each area, the Plan identifies the overall objective and goals in addition to specific strategies/measures that the Department will take to achieve the priorities and assigns a timeframe for implementing each strategy.

The Department also maintains 2024-2025 Strategic Priorities which relate to retention and talent acquisition, continuous employee development & training, competitive, forward-thinking policy development, upcoming contracts, and industry recognition.

Based on Department information and conversations with staff, M&J identified the following main strategic priorities:

- Occupational Compliance
- Culture
- Recruitment and Retention
- Training and Employee Development
- Customer Service

Occupational Compliance

The Department helps ensure that the County maintains occupational compliance (such as maintaining current driver's licenses, commercial driver's license, and other job-specific licensing/certification) within its workforce. Strategies implemented to improve occupational compliance procedures include striving towards independence from the County's occupational medicine vendor. The County has implemented tools to send notifications to the Department and employee when Department of Transportation Certifications are approaching expiration. This has reduced the Department's reliance on the vendor by creating tracking tools internally. Reliance on the vendor resulted in inefficiencies due to difficulties in maintaining an accurate database of newly hired employees, existing employees, and employees who have separated from the County. Within the past three years, the Occupational Compliance Division ("Division") has brought data inventory and database responsibilities in-house to help ensure that information is accurate, with the goal of improving efficiency and allowing for more data collection. The Division is now able to independently generate disqualification and expiration. An area for opportunity relates to the manual data entry process in order to maintain the databases for reporting. The Division is currently tracking employee data on Excel spreadsheets.

Furthermore, the Division is working with the HRIS Division to implement functionality within CV360 such as creating the ability for employees to upload driver's licenses so that expiration reports are generated within CV360 and CV360 can provide automated warnings for employees whose commercial driver's license is approaching expiration or who need to retake a medical exam.

The Department administers an Employee Assistance Program ("EA Program") which is designed to assist work organizations in addressing productivity issues and employees in identifying and resolving personal concerns, including health, marital, family, financial, alcohol drug, legal, emotional, stress, or other personal issues that may affect job performance. The EA Program provides substance abuse professionals and other free resources such as mental health counseling. Each employee receives six free professional sessions per personal issue they experience. Also, the Department administers a Second Chance Program to help provide treatment to employees who have failed a drug or alcohol test to help them keep their jobs. The Second Chance Program provides treatment and resources to treat substance abuse problems.

Culture

An additional strategic priority of the Department includes enhancing and promoting County culture and fostering communication regarding HR policy and procedures. The Department conducts Countywide Policy Council meetings which serve as virtual town hall meetings to discuss HR updates by division and allow attendees (typically HR Liaisons across departments) to ask questions and express concerns related to their departments and needed procedures or policies. The Department also creates “HR Buzz” documents to communicate general updates and procedural changes to County employees.

Since the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Department has administered a vaccine incentive program which provides vaccination payouts to employees who receive the COVID-19 vaccination series in addition to boosters and flu shots in an effort to help foster a healthy workforce.

The Department implements annual Employee Recognition Award Programs in which the Department honors employees who reach a milestone with service years (5-40 years in increments of 5 years), provides Star Awards to individuals and teams, and hosts in-person recognition ceremonies.

In 2024, the Department commissioned a Four-Day Workweek and Staggered Work Schedule Feasibility Study (“Study”) to assess the feasibility of the County implementing four-day workweeks and staggered schedules. The Study also assessed processes related to hybrid work schedules across selected County departments. Conclusions of the Study included the identification of operational and financial challenges related to implementing four-day workweeks and preferences towards hybrid and remote arrangements.

The Department developed and implemented a Countywide Equal Employment Opportunity Plan (“EEOP”) in compliance with United States Department of Justice requirements to uphold equal employment opportunities. The EEOP covered the period from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2024. The EEOP identified current actions being taken by the Department to strengthen minority and female representation across all levels such as research and contact list development, recruitment material development including bilingual materials, outreach and relationship building, and recruit analysis and success measurement

The Department plans to implement a paid parental leave policy and an elder care leave policy, with the goal of helping improve culture and providing flexibility to employees.

Recruitment and Retention

A strategic goal of the Department is to increase recruitment and retention within the County. To help achieve this goal, the Department participates in regular classification and compensation analysis to ensure that position classifications align with incumbents’ job duties and with their salaries. As such, the Department conducts Desk Audits and shadowing to identify incumbents’ main job duties and functions to ensure alignment with job descriptions and salary. Furthermore, the Department participates in equity analysis to ensure that employees with similar job titles, education, experience, and skillsets are earning fair and equitable salaries.

The Department has implemented many pay initiatives to help increase pay for County employees. The following list provides examples of initiatives implemented in 2024:

- Police recruits starting pay \$57,200; Fire Recruits starting pay \$53,040; E-911 Communication Officers starting pay \$46,800
- 4% increase for sworn Police and Fire recruits, paramedics, and EMTs
- 4% for all employees in E-911 hired pay period of 1/6/24 or earlier
- Minimum wage increased to \$17.68/hour
- 4% base pay increase for general employees (non-public safety)
- \$2,600 incentive/year for Fire/Rescue employees with Advanced EMT certification and for members of the dive team and HAZMAT team
- \$1,500 retention incentive for employees hired prior to July 1, 2024

An additional initiative to enhance recruitment and retention efforts includes stay and exit interviews conducted by the Policy Development Division (“Division”). When an employee departs from the County, the Division distributes an Exit Interview Survey to gather feedback from employees to identify trends, improve retention strategies, and enhance workplace policies and conditions. Furthermore, the Department implemented stay interviews as a tool within departments that experience the most turnover to be more proactive and strategic in identifying reasons why employees prefer to work in the County. The Department plans to implement stay interviews within departments with higher retention rates to expand data gathering efforts on effective retention strategies.

To help increase recruiting effectiveness, the Department has established relationships with local associations and organizations such as the Latin American Association, Georgia Hispanic Association, Goodwill, and local technical colleges to reach a broader range of skillsets and trades and to help recruit candidates of different backgrounds to promote diversity. Furthermore, the Department is utilizing alternate platforms such as Handshake to advertise job postings.

The Department is in the process of commissioning a classification and compensation study to identify benchmark positions including collecting and analyzing salary data, pay plan development and implementation guidance. Also, the Department plans to establish an employee referral incentive program as a recruitment tool.

Based on conversations with multiple County departments, other departments feel that they are not receiving the most qualified applicants for job postings within their departments due to filtering or screening of applicants by HR prior to passing them onto the departments. As such, some departments feel that it would be beneficial to receive access to the entire applicant pool to ensure qualified candidates are not screened out. A more immediate step is to have end-user departments better educate the HR Recruiting employees on the specific qualifications, skills, and desired experience of candidates to consistently provide more efficient candidate screenings.

Training and Employee Development

An additional Department goal is to provide and establish procedures surrounding training and development opportunities for County personnel. The Organization & Employee Development Division (“Division”) provides the majority of training to employees in-house. The Department provides CV360 specific training in addition to position specific training including soft skills trainings such as managerial skills, conflict resolution, and customer service training. The Department’s goal is for County employees (Executive Branch employees or merit departments) to meet minimum training requirements as outlined in its Service-Level Agreements:

- Leadership
 - 8 hours
- Managers/Supervisors
 - 16 hours
- Individual Contributors
 - 8 hours

With the implementation of CV360 in 2022, the County’s performance appraisal process was transitioned to be paperless within CV360. The Department was responsible for creating an electronic process for performance appraisals. The Department currently allows County departments to implement different types of performance appraisals as necessary. The types of performance appraisals are outlined in the following list:

- Standard Appraisal
 - Serves as a performance feedback summary for an annual period
 - Includes critical job elements or key performance indicators
 - Identify strengths
 - Identify opportunities
 - Identify accomplishments
 - Identify developmental goals
- Check-in Document
 - Each individual manager can determine when to conduct performance check-ins with staff
 - Identify strengths
 - Identify opportunities
 - Identify accomplishments
 - Identify developmental goals
 - Identify career goals
- Anytime Document Process
 - Complete manager questionnaire to provide constructive feedback and comments on employee progress towards goals
 - Set goals and align them to County strategic priorities
 - Assign an overall rating for performance or rate individual goals

The Division provides training to managerial staff and employees regarding how to complete performance evaluations within CV360. Due to unique departmental needs, the Division allows managerial staff to choose the evaluation process which best suits their needs. As such, the performance evaluation process is not standardized within each department.

The Department plans to relaunch the Bright Futures Leadership Development Program with the purpose of cultivating an internal pool of candidates capable of advancing to management and executive level roles. The Department seeks to partner with a Georgia-based college/university to execute the program.

Customer Service

Customer service is a key priority of the Department. The Department's customers are external departments and employees. To enhance communications and relationships between the Department and its customer departments, there are positions ("HR Liaisons") housed within County departments that help to assist with functions such as payroll deductions, recruiting, and benefits administration. The HR Liaisons serve as liaisons between departmental staff and County HR and serve as the first HR point of contact for HR-related matters. As such, the HR Department Divisions maintain regular communication with HR Liaisons regarding personnel matters within County departments. While HR Liaisons work closely with HR Department personnel, HR Liaisons report to Directors within their individual departments. Due to HR Liaisons reporting to Department Directors and not HR, there is opportunity for HR Liaisons to communicate or help implement HR policies and procedures inconsistently across departments without a governance structure which promotes accountability.

The Department migrated to CV360 in 2022 which has provided a better customer experience and platform for end-user departments while creating greater efficiency within the Department. The implementation of CV360 has resulted in some of the following benefits:

- Streamlined, electronic onboarding process with reduced cycle times for hiring and onboarding
- Electronic document management for personnel records and electronic HR workflows, reducing paperwork and manual effort
- Real-time recruitment dashboard reporting to track hiring and separation trends
- Strengthened cybersecurity protocols to protect HR data
- Expanded self-service portals for employees to access HR services more efficiently

While the implementation of CV360 has largely resulted in gains in efficiency, the Department is still in the process of working with the County Department of Innovation & Technology to tailor CV360 to the Department's needs. The Department has experienced issues with CV360 such as users being able to delete documents. Also, the Department experiences issues when trying to generate reports, citing that reporting features are difficult to use and are not intuitive. The Department also experiences general issues with CV360 related to user acceptance of a new system, user-friendliness and not being tailored for recruiting needs such as being able to sort open job postings in alphabetical order.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

The Department maintains documentation in the following areas:

- Policies & Procedures
- Standard Operating Procedures
- Service-Level Agreements
- Merit System Council Documentation
- Hearing Officer Documentation

Policies & Procedures

The Department maintains Administrative Policies & Procedures in accordance with the personnel chapter of County code. The policies and procedures were adopted in 1982 with amendments and codification changes through March 2023. Sections of the policies and procedures include:

- Recruitment and examination
- Position classification plan
- Maintenance of registers
- Compensation plan
- Certification and appointment
- Veteran's preference
- Probationary status
- Promotion, transfer & demotion
- Performance appraisal
- Attendance and leave
- Disciplinary actions and appeals
- Domestic partnerships
- Employee organizations
- Appeal Hearings & Merit System Council Code
- Other administrative policies
- Administrative procedures updates
- Other policies (and forms)

In addition to the policies and procedures, the Department maintains other individual policies such as:

- Confidentiality Agreement Policy
- HR Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy
- Fitness-For-Duty Policy
- Flexible Work Schedule Policy
- Holiday Pay for Alternative (Compressed) Schedules Policy
- Impact of Sustained Disciplinary Action on Promotion & Transfer Opportunity Policy
- Inadvertent or Intentional Omissions on Employment Applications Policy
- Inclement Weather & Emergency Closure Policy
- Paid Time Off to Vote Policy
- Americans With Disabilities Act Policy
- Compensatory Time for FLSA Exempt Employees Policy
- Education vs. Experience Equivalence Policy
- Premium (3x) Overtime Pay Policy
- Processing Payroll for Suspended Employees Working Alternative (Compressed) Schedules Policy
- Shift Differential Pay Policy
- Tuition Reimbursement Policy

The Department's policies outline the date of issuance and the date of any updates. Based on M&J's review, six out of the 16 policies were issued and updated prior to 2022. The earliest policy was issued/updated in 2011.

Standard Operating Procedures

The Department also maintains HR standard operating procedures (“SOPs”) in accordance with the personnel chapter of the DeKalb County code. SOPs are available for the following subject areas:

- Director’s Office
- Business Division
- Policy Division
- Generalist Division
- HRIS Division
- Organization & Employee Development Division
- Occupational Compliance Division
- Employee Relations Division

The SOPs are for internal Department use for employees to reference and include job aides to complete various tasks and job duties within each Division. The SOPs are detailed and informative and include step-by-step guides for completing tasks. Although the SOPs do not include dates of when the SOP was published or updated, SOPs appear to be up-to-date due to inclusion of procedures and processes completed within CV360.

Service-Level Agreements

The Department maintains service-level agreements (“SLAs”) related to services provided to County departments. The Department’s SLAs define services and process which the Department provides to external departments and outlines the expectation of external departments and the HR service commitment for responding to customers or following through on service provision. SLAs apply to each HR Division and provide SOPs and instructions to end-users related to requesting services. The SLAs were last updated in February 2025 and therefore appear to be aligned with current practices.

The following list provides examples of the types of services included in the SLAs:

• Grievance Process	• Executive Recruiting
• Complaint Process	• General Recruiting
• Disciplinary Appeal Process	• Internal Equity Review
• Training	• Salary Surveys
• Forms	• Reorganization

Merit System Council Documentation

The Department maintains a Merit System Council (“MSC”) Reference Manual (“Manual”). The purpose of the Manual is to outline policies and procedures for the MSC according to County code. Sections of the Manual include:

- MSC Summary
- Disciplinary Actions and Appeals
- Appeal Hearings and MSC
- DeKalb County Personnel Code – Chapter 20
- Sample Hearing Decision
- Sample MSC Decision
- Human Resources Contacts

The Manual includes sections of County code which were last updated in October 2019. The Manual was last updated in May 2022.

In addition to the Manual, the Department maintains an MSC Summary document which includes procedures for appointment, qualifications, and duties of MSC members. The MSC Summary was last updated in February 2025.

Hearing Officer Documentation

The Department maintains a Hearing Officer Reference Manual (“Reference Manual”) which outlines policies and procedures for Hearing Officers according to County code. Sections of the Reference Manual include:

- DeKalb County Hearing Officers Qualifications and Duties Summary
- Professional Summaries of Current County Hearing Officers
- Appeal Hearing & MSC Procedures – Administrative Procedures to the Personnel Section of the DeKalb County Code
- Personnel Chapter of the DeKalb County Code
- Example Employee Disciplinary Letter of Intent
- Example Final Disciplinary Letter
- Employee Disciplinary Action Appeal Procedures
- Employee Disciplinary Action Appeal Form
- County Employee Grievance Policy
- Employee Grievance Form
- Human Resources Contact Information

The Reference Manual includes sections which were last updated in 2015, 2018, and 2023.

The Department also maintains a Hearing Officers Summary document which includes procedures for the appointment, qualifications, and duties of Hearing Officers. The Hearing Officers Summary was last updated in February 2025.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

The Department tracks many data points to measure workload and analyze performance. The Department produces an annual metrics presentation which includes performance measures related to each of its Divisions. Some of the metrics include:

- Percentage of employees evaluated
- Number of morale-building initiatives/events
- Policy Council meetings and percentage of respondents who expressed increased awareness and understanding of HR policies and practices
- Percentage of separated employees who completed exit interview surveys
- Time to hire
- Turnover rates
- Percentage of executives and manager/supervisor attaining minimum training hours

Division Reporting

HR Divisions generate reports which are provided to Department and County leadership on a regular basis. Types of data collected and reported relate to:

- Staffing
- Feedback
- Employee Relations
- Training and Development
- Occupational Compliance

Staffing Analysis

The Department tracks metrics related to individual departments which are served by HR Generalists. The Department tracks turnover data on a monthly basis for County departments and Countywide including the following data points:

- Active employees per month
- Regular terminations per month
- Regular terminations year-to-date
- Monthly turnover rate for regular employees
- Estimated annual turnover rate (monthly turnover rate multiplied by 12)
- Voluntary turnover numbers and rate
- Percent of County turnover that is voluntary

The Department benchmarks turnover rates to national averages and can generate reports which compare turnover in department divisions or staff types (i.e. sworn vs. nonsworn for the Police Department). The Department utilizes the data to identify departments with the highest turnover rates and to focus recruitment efforts on specific departments or staff types.

The Department also generates hiring metric reports which include data points related to County employees hired such as the number of days from requisition to date offer extended, date of requisition creation, date which an offer was extended, candidate information, and the recruiter associated with the candidate. The Department utilizes the data to help ensure its service-level agreement of 60 days from the date of requisition creation to the date an offer is extended is upheld.

Other staffing metrics which are captured and tracked include recruitment efforts within the Classification & Compensation & Recruiting Division and meetings with assigned departments to discuss recruitment initiatives in addition to positions which the Division has conducted executive recruitments for. Also, the Department may be requested by individual departments to compare specific County departmental salaries to surrounding governments for benchmarking purposes.

While the Department's performance metrics align with strategic priorities to increase retention and recruitment, the Department could consider implementing additional key performance indicators such as time to promotion, HR to employee ratio, time to resignation, absenteeism, and employee referral rate.

Feedback

In efforts to track performance and customer satisfaction, the Department administers different types of surveys. The Department uses the following scale for surveys:

- 5 – strongly agree
- 4 – agree
- 3 - neutral
- 2 – disagree
- 1 – strongly disagree

The Department provides a New Employee Orientation Survey ("NEO Survey") to new hires who complete orientation. The NEO Survey includes questions regarding information and communications prior to orientation, CV360 onboarding experience, usefulness of information, questions specific to material covered in the Sexual Harassment Prevention training, overall content, duration, and whether knowledge was enhanced. The NEO Survey also allows for users to comment and provide specific feedback. The Department aggregates the response data on an annual basis and utilizes data to obtain feedback on its orientation operations. From 2021 to 2024, the Department received 2,208 responses with an average rating of 4.7.

Similar to the New Employee Orientation Survey, the Department also administers Training Surveys (“Training Survey”) to County employees regarding general training. The Training Survey includes questions related to course usefulness, enhancement of knowledge or skills, and coverage of training topics and questions. The Training Survey also includes free response questions such as the information users found the most helpful and additional training topics users would like to see covered. The Department aggregates response data on an annual basis and utilizes data to receive feedback on general trainings and availability of training offered. From 2020 to 2024, the Department received 3,723 responses with an average rating of 4.8.

The Department tracks data related to its Policy Council meetings. The Department provides participants with a survey link following each meeting to collect feedback related to each meeting. The survey includes questions related to usefulness of the meeting, level of engagement and soliciting of feedback, agenda items and information coverage, as well as whether information presented increased participants’ awareness and understanding of HR policies and practices. The Department aggregates responses on an annual basis and utilizes data to improve Policy Council meetings. Between 2020 and 2024, the Department received a total of 90 Policy Council evaluations and surveys indicated an average rating of 4.6.

The Department conducts exit interviews and stay interviews to gather feedback to improve retention and recruitment strategies. As such, the Department provides exit interview surveys for separating employees to complete optionally. The data is then aggregated, analyzed, and sent to HR leadership to highlight key turnover trends and recommendations. Departments are selected to participate in Stay Interviews depending upon departmental turnover trends and exit interview feedback to identify key themes of dissatisfaction. The Department conducts stay interviews without supervisors or managers present to ensure open dialogue. Interviews may be conducted individually or in small groups based on department needs and employees respond to questionnaire for recordkeeping purposes. The questionnaire includes tenure, whether they have support and trust of team members, how often they think of leaving the County, and what the County needs to do to retain them. Response data is then compiled into a summary report which highlights major themes, and the HR Policy Division drafts recommendations based on feedback. The HR Policy Division is in the process of implementing stay interviews within departments with high retention.

The Department also began conducting Customer Satisfaction Surveys in 2024 which are sent to department leaders to obtain feedback on HR services. The purpose of the Customer Satisfaction Survey is to identify areas for reinforcements and improvements. The survey results have not yet been published.

Employee Relations

The Department collects and tracks monthly data related to employee relations. Data points tracked include:

- Number of employee grievances
- Number of employee complaints
- Number of employee disciplinary appeal hearings
- Number if disciplinary appeal hearings upheld
- Number of MSC appeal hearings
- Number of MSC appeal hearings upheld
- Total average percentage of all actions upheld
- Number of customer engagements (i.e. investigation-related meetings, site visits, mediations, in-office consults with customer departments)

Data collected related to employee relations aligns with the Department's commitment to customer service and an equitable workplace and culture. The Department should also began tracking and establishing performance goals related to the duration of time between issue notification and issue resolution.

Training and Development

The Department tracks different types of performance data related to employee training and development. The Department tracks training courses completed by County employees. The purpose of tracking training courses completed is to measure the Organization & Employee Development Division's workload and to understand whether County employees are meeting service-level agreements defined by the Department for minimum hours of training each year. The following list identifies the actual percentage of County employees who met minimum training hours in fiscal year 2024:

- Executive Leadership Training – minimum of 8 training hours annually
 - Goal: 80%
 - Actual: 80%
- Manager/Supervisor Training – minimum of 16 training hours annually
 - Goal: 10% (current population is approximately 1,000)
 - Actual: 35%
- Executive Branch Employees (non-merit) – minimum of 8 training hours annually
 - Goal: 35%
 - Actual: 21%

As shown by the data, the Department is meeting its goal related to County staff meeting minimum training requirements outlined in SLAs for merit department employees. However, the Department is not receiving 100% participation for Manager/Supervisor trainings. To help strengthen the Department's recommended training hours within SLAs, the Department is in the process of creating and formalizing a policy to enforce required minimum training hours for County employees.

The Department also tracks data related to performance reviews completed for merit and non-merit departments. Based on 2024 data, the Department met its goal to have 60% of employees evaluated within non-merit departments. It should be noted that performance appraisals are required by merit departments.

The Department tracks employee engagement data related to activities offered and participation by departments in activities such as the Annual Employee Recognition Award Program. The Department also tracks dollars used for its tuition reimbursement program.

While the Department's training and development metrics relate to strategic goals, the Department could consider tracking additional metrics related to cost such as training cost per employee and return on investment. Also, in efforts to measure employee engagement, the Department could consider administering employee engagement surveys to all County employees to measure employee motivation, commitment, satisfaction, and to provide insights to improve the County work environment and boost productivity.

Occupational Compliance

The Department tracks data related to the Occupational Compliance Division ("Division") such as weekly random drug testing administered, information about the randomly selected employee, and the results of each test. The Division provides a quarterly report to County leadership which compiles all drug test results. The Division also tracks data related to Department of Transportation certification and expiration and Commercial Driver's License expirations. The Division tracks other data as required by federal regulations. The Division tracks performance measures related to strategic priorities to maintain occupational compliance.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

Culture within the Department is generally positive, and staff appreciate the current hybrid work schedule which allows staff to work from home on select day(s) of the week. Select staff members noted issues with work and life balance and demanding workloads that do not allow time for strategic planning or improvement. Staff members noted that they would like to see additional team building events and outings implemented to help increase morale.

Related to the work environment, staff noted concerns related to inadequate office space especially if employees were expected to be in the office on the same day(s). Hybrid staff members currently must stagger which days they are in the office to ensure there is adequate workspace for everyone, and staff members are sharing offices. Also, the Department does not have a dedicated training space to conduct large employee trainings (20+ participants) that is not shared or used by other County entities. Therefore, securing space for training can be difficult due to limited availability.

Regarding communications, Department Managers meet with the Director on a weekly basis. The HRIS and Business Divisions each have biweekly Division meetings. The Department conducts Department-wide meetings on a quarterly basis.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

The Department won many awards in 2024 such as:

- Atlanta Business Chronicle & SHRM HR Excellence
 - Leading Transformational Change/Culture Award Finalist
- Reworked Impact Award
 - Collaboration Excellence – Silver Category
- National Association of Counties
 - Bright Futures Leadership Development Program
 - Get Vaxxed Employee Vaccination Incentive Category

The Department's Classification & Compensation & Recruiting Division ("Division") conducts nationwide executive recruitments in-house with staff assigned to executive recruitments. To aid the Department's search, the Division creates marketing brochures to market the position and its compensation packages and identifies and contacts candidates within other similar roles across the Country to market the position to different networks of professionals. Because this service is typically contracted by governments, the Division saves the County around \$35,000-\$55,000 per initiative according to the Department's Strategic Plan.

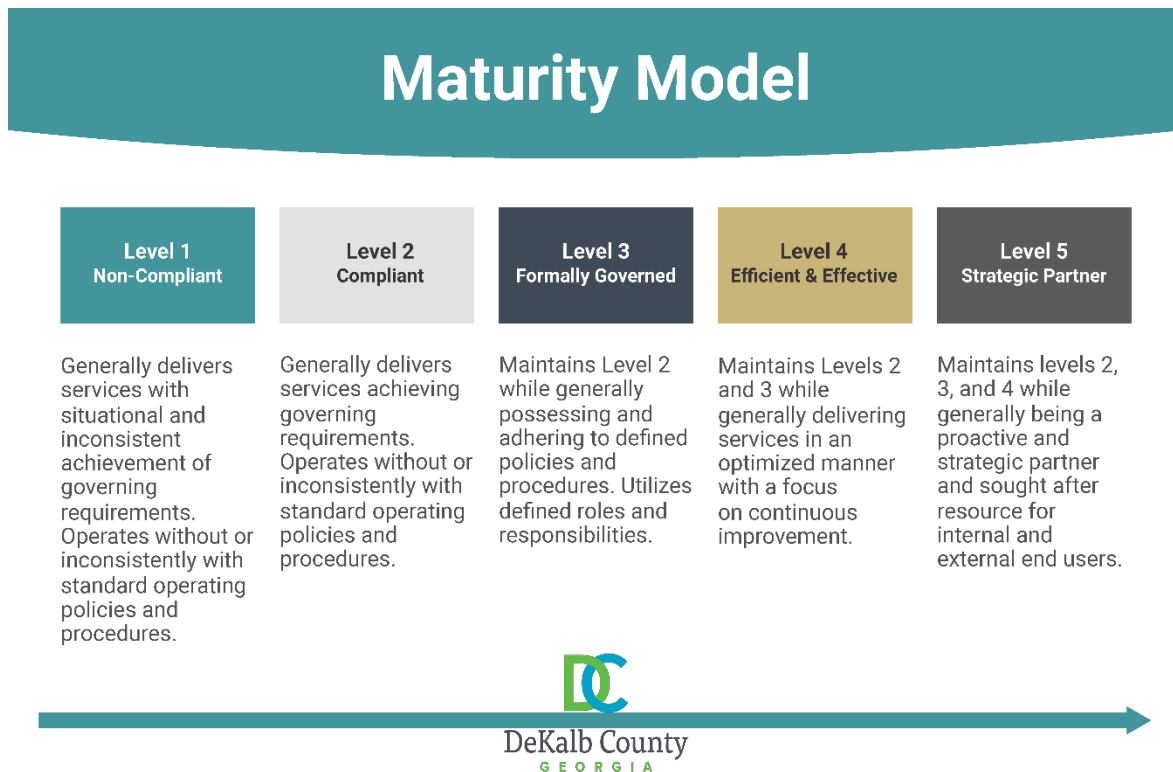
In 2022, the Department implemented CV360 which has provided a better customer experience and platform for end-user departments while creating greater efficiency within the Department. The Department's onboarding process is completely paperless and personnel files after 2022 are now maintained electronically. The Department is in the process of converting and condensing paper files to be stored within CV360. The Department's performance appraisal process is also largely paperless.

The Department conducts stay interviews within County departments that experience the most turnover in an effort to be more proactive and strategic in identifying reasons why employees prefer to work in the County and what the County can do to increase retention. The Department plans to conduct stay interviews within departments with higher retention rates to expand data gathering efforts on effective retention strategies.

The Department administers an Employee Assistance Program ("EA Program") which is designed to assist work organizations in addressing productivity issues and employees in identifying and resolving personal concerns, including health, marital, family, financial, alcohol drug, legal, emotional, stress, or other personal issues that may affect job performance. The EA Program provides substance abuse professionals and other free resources such as mental health counseling. Each employee receives six free professional sessions per personal issue they experience. Also, the Department administers a Second Chance Program to help provide treatment to employees who have failed a drug or alcohol test to help them keep their jobs. The Second Chance Program provides treatment and resources to treat substance abuse problems.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 3: Formally Governed. While the Department is operating efficiently in many ways, the Department must enhance its authority and enforcement of Countywide policies and work to ensure consistency in HR activities affecting County departments.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: The Occupational Compliance Division performs manual data to maintain the databases for position compliance reporting. The Division is currently tracking employee data on Excel spreadsheets.

Recommendation 1: The Department should collaborate with the Department of Innovation and Technology to explore options and solutions for storing occupational compliance database information and generating disqualification and expiration reports within a centralized system.

Observation 2: The Occupational Compliance Division is working with the HRIS Division to implement functionality within CV360 such as requiring employees to upload driver's licenses so that expiration reports are generated within CV360 and CV360 can provide automated warnings for employees whose commercial driver's license is approaching expiration or who need to retake a medical exam.

Recommendation 2: The Occupational Compliance Division should continue working with the HRIS Division to require the uploading of driver's licenses by employees so that expiration reports may be generated automatically and provide warnings to individuals whose commercial driver's license is approaching expiration or who need to retake a medical exam. The Occupational Compliance Division should continue to work with the HRIS Division to find alternative options for streamlining and centralizing database maintenance and reporting which is manually completed through Excel.

Observation 3: The Division provides training to managerial staff and employees on completion of performance evaluations within CV360. Due to unique departmental needs, the Division allows managerial staff to choose the evaluation process which best suits their needs. As such, the performance evaluation process is not standardized within each department.

Recommendation 3: The Department should establish and define a singular, annual (or other period) performance appraisal process for County departments to use to ensure standardization and consistency.

Observation 4: While HR Liaisons work closely with HR Department personnel, HR Liaisons report to Directors within their individual departments. Due to HR Liaisons reporting to Department Directors and not HR, there is opportunity for HR Liaisons to HR policies and procedures inconsistently across departments without a governance structure which promotes accountability.

Recommendation 4: The Department should assess the current governance structure of the HR Liaisons to determine if there are methods to ensure greater accountability and consistency in HR processes throughout the County.

Observation 5: While the implementation of CV360 has largely resulted in gains in efficiency, the Department is still in the process of working with the County Innovation & Technology Department to tailor CV360 to the Department's needs. The Department has experienced issues with CV360 such as users being able to delete documents. Also, the Department experiences issues when trying to generate reports, citing that reporting features are difficult to use and are not intuitive. The Department also experiences general issues with CV360 related to user-friendliness and not being tailored for recruiting needs such as being able to sort open job postings in alphabetical order.

Recommendation 5: Department Divisions that experience issues with CV360 should continue to collaborate with the Business and HRIS Divisions to help implement and optimize appropriate workflows. The Department should continue to work with the County Department of Innovation & Technology to better tailor CV360 to the County's needs.

Observation 6a: The Department maintains Administrative Policies & Procedures in accordance with the personnel chapter of County code. The policies and procedures were adopted in 1982 with amendments and codification changes through March 2023.

Observation 6b: The Department's policies outline the date of issuance and the date of any updates. Based on M&J's review, six out of the 16 policies were issued and updated prior to 2022. The earliest policy was issued/updated in 2011.

Observation 6c: Although SOPs do not include dates of when the SOP was published or updated, SOPs appear to be up-to-date due to inclusion of procedures and processes completed within CV360.

Observation 6d: The MSC Reference Manual includes sections of County code which were last updated in October 2019. The manual was last updated in May 2022.

Observation 6e: The Hearing Officer Reference Manual includes sections which were last updated in 2015, 2018, and 2023.

Recommendation 6: The Department should review sections of its Administrative Policies & Procedures, policies, SOPs, and MSC Reference and Hearing Officer Reference Manuals which are dated before 2022 and prioritize updating the most outdated procedures first. As part of the review, a "last reviewed" date should be added to specific sections or content within the documents to record the fact that the content was reviewed, even if updates or changes were not needed. Ensuring documentation is up to date will help to promote consistency in policy and practices.

Observation 7: While the Department's performance metrics align with strategic priorities to increase retention and recruitment, the Department could consider implementing additional key performance indicators.

Recommendation 7: The Department should consider implementing additional key performance indicators such as time to promotion, HR to employee ratio, time to resignation, and absenteeism, and employee referral rate.

Observation 8: The Department is not receiving 100% participation and achievement for Manager/Supervisor trainings. To help strengthen the Department's recommended training hours within SLAs, the Department is in the process of creating and formalizing a policy to enforce required minimum training hours for County employees.

Recommendation 8: The Department should continue to develop and publish a policy to enforce required minimum training hours for County employees as well as prioritization and allowance of employee time for training from all County department directors to ensure consistency in training received.

Observation 9: While the Department's training and development metrics relate to strategic goals, the Department could consider tracking additional metrics related to cost such as training cost per employee and return on investment. Also, in efforts to measure employee engagement, the Department could consider administering employee engagement surveys to all County employees to measure employee motivation, commitment, satisfaction, and to provide insights to improve the County work environment and boost productivity.

Recommendation 9: The Department should consider tracking additional metrics related to cost such as training cost per employee and return on investment and administering employee engagement surveys to all County employees to measure employee motivation, commitment, satisfaction, and to provide insights to improve the County work environment and boost productivity.

Observation 10: Staff members noted that they would like to see additional team building events and outings implemented to help increase morale.

Recommendation 10: The Department should prioritize efforts to plan outings and team-building activities to help increase morale.

Observation 11a: Staff noted concerns related to inadequate office space especially if employees were expected to be in the office on the same day(s). Hybrid staff members currently must stagger which days they are in the office to ensure there is adequate workspace for everyone. Staff members are sharing offices to ensure adequate space is available.

Observation 11b: The Department does not have a dedicated training space to conduct employee training that is not shared or used by other County entities. Therefore, securing space for training can be difficult due to limited availability.

Recommendation 11: The Department should collaborate with the Department of Facilities Management to identify additional workspaces for employees to reduce or eliminate the number of offices shared by employees to help increase morale. The Department should also identify additional space for HR trainings to be held which is not shared with other County entities.

Observation 12a: Job descriptions created by the Department are generally vague and not tailored to County department's needs. As a result, job descriptions do not consistently describe actual job responsibilities. The most recent classification and compensation study was conducted in 2016.

Observation 12b: Relatedly, job titling is not appropriate for certain roles within departments and therefore, staff feel that their job titles and salaries are not adequate for their actual roles and responsibilities.

Observation 12c: County staff feel that there is an inconsistent application of pay scales. More specifically, staff expressed that experienced staff receive limited pay raises, while new hires with less experience may receive higher salaries than staff who have tenure with the County. Staff feel that due to discrepancies in HR's understanding of how experience is comparable and qualified, pay scales are implemented inconsistently.

Recommendation 12: The Department should continue its efforts to conduct a classification and compensation study. The Department should ensure that an evaluation of job descriptions compared to actual roles and responsibilities is performed as part of the study. The Department should also ensure that once pay scales are assessed and potentially adjusted, the Department applies and implements pay scales consistently to existing employees and future new hires.

Observation 13: Compensatory time represents time which an employee who is exempt from overtime works additional hours (typically over 40 hours) and can use the additional time worked at a later date of their choosing to take time off. As such, compensatory time differs from overtime and from paid time-off. Compensatory time is tracked by employees and supervisors within Excel but is not tracked formally within the Department's timekeeping or payroll systems.

Recommendation 13: The Department should establish, and document clear procedures related to compensatory time accrual and the tracking of compensatory time to ensure the time is being earned, tracked, and used consistently by all Department divisions and units. The Department should establish a formal system for tracking compensatory time and should create a formal policy surrounding on-call time which may be compensated using compensatory time to ensure consistency.

Observation 14: Based on numerous department interviews, it was communicated that employees with alternative schedules (such as 4-day workweeks with 10 hours per day) do not consistently have the whole day coded as a holiday and are asked to use paid time-off to account for the difference between the 8 hours of holiday time and the extra hours typically worked during the alternative schedule. As an example, staff who work 4-day workweeks with 10 hours per day, report only receiving eight hours of holiday pay as opposed to the 10 hours that the employee typically works. In order to receive their full pay for holidays, employees report having to use two hours of paid time-off.

Recommendation 14: The Department should assess policies surrounding alternate work schedules and holiday pay and should consider allowing employees with alternate schedules to receive holiday pay hours commensurate to their full workday's worth of pay on holidays that fall on workdays of alternate-schedule employees.

Observation 15: County departments expressed concerns regarding managerial training material being overly generic and not adequately situational or applicable dependent on County departments' work environment. Furthermore, customer service training has been described as not meeting end-user department's needs.

Recommendation 15: The Department should assess training offerings and material to ensure the Department's training function is robust and is able to be tailored by HR or the County departments to ensure maximum effectiveness. When creating managerial training, the Department should take into consideration different managerial environments within County departments.

Observation 16: There are inconsistencies related to certification and training processes within County departments. Training and certification functions appear to be driven by individual departments regarding which courses can be taken and paid for as departments must decide how much of their budgets to allocate for training purposes. As observed within the HR Department, not all County departments are currently participating in programs such as the tuition reimbursement program. Therefore, there are inconsistencies regarding which training opportunities are available to County departments.

Recommendation 16: The Department should create a County-wide policy or procedure to address training needs of all County departments and ensure that training needs are fulfilled consistently. Furthermore, the Department should implement policies or procedures which require departments to participate in tuition reimbursement to ensure all County employees are allowed the same opportunities. The County and the Department should also consider any budget related to tuition reimbursement be centralized within the Department as opposed to residing at the department level where the funds may be used for other purposes.

Observation 17: Related to the performance appraisal process, staff expressed desires for a 360 evaluation process in which staff can assess team members such as peers and direct managers/supervisors.

Recommendation 17: The Department should consider implementing an anonymous survey process in which staff members can provide performance reviews or feedback for peers and direct managers/supervisors as part of a 360 performance evaluation process. The Department could implement a 360-Degree Feedback Survey which allows for feedback to be anonymous or could integrate a 360 evaluation process into the existing performance evaluation processes.

Observation 18: Staff noted communication issues and delays related to onboarding processes such as requesting and obtaining equipment as initial processes with HR and the County Department of Innovation & Technology are decentralized and are the responsibility of individual departments to request.

Recommendation 18: The Department should assess current onboarding request processes and should collaborate with the County Department of Innovation & Technology to serve as the centralized source for onboarding procedures such as processing requests for equipment for new hires. As such, there should be a process in place which notifies both the Department and the County Department of Innovation & Technology to coordinate to provide new hires with proper equipment for performing job duties.

Observation 19: End-user department staff feel that they are not receiving the most qualified applicants for job postings within their departments due to filtering or screening of applicants by HR prior to passing them onto the departments. As such, departments feel that it would be beneficial to receive access to the entire applicant pool to ensure qualified candidates are not screened out.

Recommendation 19: The Department should allow departments who request access to the entire applicant pool to have access to ensure qualified applicants are being presented to departments. A more immediate step is to have end-user departments better educate the HR Recruiting employees on the specific qualifications, skills, and desired experience of candidates to consistently provide more efficient candidate screenings.

Conclusion

The Human Resources Department is a critical function managing the County's greatest asset – its people. The Department has enhanced efficiency in many areas over the past few years, but still has significant opportunities to enhance operational efficiency, drive consistency in application of HR policies and practices, and enhance end-user experiences.

The Department should continue to streamline the use of CV360 and address current known issues. The Department should also work with County leadership to increase accountability at the end-user department level for maintaining compliance with countywide HR initiatives.

We are confident that with current County and Department efforts, as well as the recommendations contained in this report, that the Human Resources Department will continue to support County employees and future employees. We would like to thank Department leadership for their time and resources, and for allowing us to conduct interviews with 10 individuals across levels of the Department and perform job shadowing of certain functions.

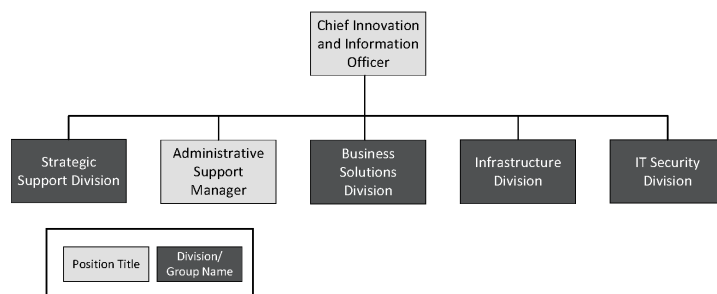
3.K Innovation Technology

Introduction

The Department of Innovation and Technology (“DOIT” or “Department”) is charged with providing information technology (“IT”) services, support, and strategic planning, and project management services to County departments.

Organization

The current organizational model was developed and implemented during a restructuring in 2015-2016. While there may have been one-off changes in positions or titles, there has not been a full organizational structure assessment within the last ten years. The Department is led by a Chief Information Officer (“CIO”). The current CIO was appointed in January 2025; the position had been vacant since August of 2024. The current organizational chart is depicted below:



The CIO has five direct reports: four direct reports who lead divisions, and an Administrative Support Manager. The Administrative Support Manager is responsible for the Department’s administrative and human resources duties, and does not have any support staff. The Administrative Support Manager may also be assigned support of other special projects in the County. The four DOIT divisions are:

- Strategic Support Division
- Business Solutions Division
- Infrastructure Division
- IT Security Division

Throughout the four divisions listed above, there are a number of common job titles within IT: systems architects, systems analysts, systems administrators, etc. DOIT has created a number of levels or layers to these positions, to allow for growth and recognition of additional experience, education, or certification. Many titles have “senior” or “principal” or even “IT” designations that have resulted in job titles that may not consistently align with how these same titles are used in other organizations in both public and private industry IT. This may be contributing to the challenges in hiring for and retaining staff in these positions. The use of the same titles across nearly all divisions within DOIT oftentimes means that the title and paybands are generic, and once employees are in the roles, they may realize that the position duties are not consistent with how that title would be utilized within industry, or compensation for the type of duties they are assigned.

Strategic Support Division

An IT Manager leads the Strategic Support Division. Within the Strategic Support Division is a Fiscal Support unit, with two Business Officers and a consultant that are responsible for contract development and management, submitting Board of Commissioners' agenda items, interfund chargebacks as appropriate, and project budget and expenditure tracking. There is also a Business Alignment Support unit with two IT Business Analysts and two consultants that are charged with supporting the needs of the Project Management Office ("PMO"). One IT Business Analyst focuses predominantly on liaising with end-user departments for business process and requirement documentation and gap analysis of existing systems and procedures. The other IT Business Analyst primarily assist with developing requirements to develop testing – functional, technical, and complete testing of proposed system upgrades or new applications.

The PMO within the Strategic Support Division is led by a Management Analyst IV. The PMO has an IT Systems Architect that provides technical advising, specifications development review, and other support for PMO projects. There are four IT Project Manager positions, with one currently vacant, as well as a consultant serving in a Project Manager capacity. IT Project Managers are assigned projects primarily based on current availability, rather than specific technical or end-user department knowledge. As some of these projects can be multi-year or multi-phase projects, scheduling can be complicated, especially if projects get off schedule, or when end-user departments rarely provide advance notice to the PMO about application purchases.

The three Special Project Coordinators primarily assist the IT Project Managers on larger projects, helping to manage scheduling and phase target tracking. On occasion a Special Project Coordinator may be assigned to independently manage smaller projects.

Business Solutions Division

The Business Solutions Division is led by a Deputy CIO. The Business Solutions Division is responsible for the administration of the majority of the County's business applications, as well as the administration of County databases – predominantly Microsoft and Oracle.

The Database Administration Solutions unit is led by an IT Manager who oversees a team of two IT Systems Architects and two Database Administrators, although one Database Administrator position is currently vacant. Database administration is typically considered an infrastructure role, and is often housed in a department's infrastructure unit or division.

The Change Management/Quality Control unit is responsible for the Change Control Advisory Board, which is responsible for discussing and approving all changes that are being made to applications. The Change Management/Quality Control unit has a vacant Business Analyst position, as well as a Management Analyst IV and two Systems Analysts and provides quality assurance for pre-production change management and deployment and moving changes into the production environment.

There are five other teams within the Business Solutions Division, each assigned applications to support based on like owner groups:

- One unit supporting the HCM side of CV360; led by an IT Manager who oversees 1 Systems Architect, 1 Sr. Systems Analyst, 2 Systems Analysts, and external consultant support
- One unit supporting the ERP side of CV360; led by an IT Manager who oversees 1 IT Systems Architect (position vacant), 2 Sr. Systems Analysts, 4 Systems Analysts, and external consultant support
- One unit supporting revenue-generating and enterprise fund applications such as Infor (previously Hansen), enQuesta, and iasWorld. This Unit is led by an IT Manager who oversees 2 IT Systems Architects, 1 System Administrator, Principal; 2 sr. Systems Analysts, 3 Systems Analysts, and external consultant support
- One unit to support the public safety and court solutions, including Odyssey, Tyler, and Enterprise Justice. This unit is led by an IT Manager who oversees 1 Sr. Systems Analyst and 3 Systems Analysts
- One unit that supports public works applications, as well as other applications not captured under another unit. This includes the Board of Commissioners' Legistar system, Fleet's FASTER and FuelMaster applications, Granica, and all of Watershed Management's functional applications. This unit is led by an IT Manager who oversees 1 IT Systems Architect, 1 Systems Administrator, Principal; 3 Sr. Systems Analysts, and 5 Systems Analysts (one position currently vacant.)

Infrastructure Division

The Infrastructure Division is led by another Deputy CIO and is comprised of three units, each led by an IT Manager. The Deputy CIO over this Division departed the County during the course of M&J fieldwork.

The Communication Technologies unit is responsible for administration of the County's physical network infrastructure, and ensuring functionality, firewalls and secure access, and redundancy. The unit is also responsible for the entirety of the County's desktop phone system at more than 200 locations throughout the County. The unit has one IT Systems Architect, two Systems Administrators, and relies on Layer 3, a contractor, for managing the network operations center and providing supplemental support.

The Platform Technologies unit serves as the primary administrators of the County's servers, both physical and virtual. This team deploys servers, configures storage, and manages updates, upgrades, and patches for those servers. DOIT leadership estimated that approximately 85% of the County's servers are cloud-based, evidenced by the size of the Cloud Services Support Unit, which includes three IT Systems Architects, a Systems Administrator Principal, and a Systems Administrator. There is also a Server Storage Environment unit, that has a vacant Systems Administrator, Principal position, in addition to a Systems Administrator. This unit also uses Microsoft Services for premier support.

The Enterprise Technology Center is responsible for managing the County's help desk support for end-users, servicing nearly 6,000 users and an estimated 8,000 – 10,000 devices. The IT Service Desk is responsible for initial intake of requests for support, primarily through calls and electronically submitted tickets. The Enterprise IT Technicians on the IT Service Desk team are responsible for logging information from the callers and, as appropriate, trying to resolve the calls before ending the call with the end-user. An Enterprise IT Technician from the IT Desktop Support team also assists with handling calls and initial troubleshooting. The Enterprise Technology Center also utilizes contract staff to support the workload.

The IT Desktop Support team is led by a Supervisor. There are two Systems Administrators and six Enterprise IT Technicians, and this team provides physical support for end-users, assisting in deploying new and updated equipment, troubleshooting issues that require in-person support, and may also assist with AV needs throughout the County.

IT Security Division

The IT Security Division is led by an IT Manager who oversees two IT Systems Architects, an IT Systems Administrator, Principal, and a Systems Analyst. This Division is responsible for managing the County's security position, including monitoring for threats, remediating identified issues, and participating in testing and exercises. This team frequently collaborates with the Infrastructure Division on assessing the County's networks and firewalls, and remediating any risks or potential threats. The IT Security Division also relies on a managed service provider ("MSP") contractor to provide 24x7 monitoring of both equipment and security. The agreement with this MSP clearly defines the deployment and escalation protocols, which are managed by on-call members of the Division.

Staffing Analysis

Because the Department has not conducted any organizational workload or structure assessment in more than ten years, DOIT's staffing model is imbalanced. Some divisions, such as IT Security, appear understaffed for the current nature and requirements of their workload. Others, such as Business Solutions, may need to be evaluated for workload management and position classification since the applications they support have changed significantly in the last ten years, with many transitioning vendors and products, and others transitioning from on-premises to cloud-based, and some even to vendor-support models.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

The Department provides a number of critical, necessary technological services to the County, but it is not providing strategic direction and guidance on a consistent basis. The IT Strategic Plan that was developed for 2024-2027 is more of an operational document rather than a strategic document, describing the key operations, with less emphasis on strategic goals. Additionally, the proposed strategic goals are not measurable, making it challenging to assess their performance against these strategic goals.

The 2024-2027 Strategic Plan (“Strategic Plan”) set nine strategic goals:

- Department Support
- Data Management
- Mobility
- Modernization, Optimization, and Artificial Intelligence
- Communications Infrastructure
- Cyber Security
- Enterprise Workforce Toolset
- Public Engagement
- Staffing

Within each of the nine strategic goals are defined “tactics” (as labeled in the IT Strategic Plan), or planned activities. A number of the tactics align with what the M&J team noted as discrepancies or opportunities to enhance the current operating environment, such as the need to review RFPs for technical and compliance standards, or developing and maintaining a cloud first strategy. These items are not presented as part of a holistic, intentional strategy, however. The Strategic Plan also lacks the actionable items necessary for implementation. Many of the current DOIT staff were not aware of the Strategic Plan, or may be aware of it generally, but not aware of the specific goals and tactics in the plan, suggesting a lack of collaboration and buy-in during its development.

DOIT is predominantly in a reactive mode, due to the empowered status of many of the end-users. DOIT is occasionally able to make incremental proactive decisions, and there may be narrowly focused strategies, such as efforts around cybersecurity and the Department’s cloud-first posture, but these are not reflective of a more comprehensive and collaborative effort.

The lack of IT governance will become more critical as emerging technologies become more commonly available to governments, such as generative AI, chatbots, or robotic process automation.

Below are several strategic efforts the County should prioritize in the coming years.

Management Framework and Governing Principles

The County lacks IT governance policy, processes, or procedures, which has allowed individual departments to take ownership of their technology purchases and, to some extent, technology management, and positions DOIT in a reactive posture. The County has numerous instances where departments have independently made purchases (reportedly predominantly of SaaS cloud-based solutions) that should have been strategically purchased through DOIT. In some instances, these have been purchases for services that the County had already purchased, such as OpenGov. Additionally, an inconsistent use of the PMO has led to poor implementation practices, underutilization of purchased technologies, and in some instances reported purchasing of duplicative systems or software, rather than performing fit-gap analysis and post-implementation enhancements. These systems may also pose cybersecurity or data security risks for the County.

Exacerbating this issue is the lack of a complete and consistent management framework. M&J's fieldwork identified that end-users and divisions identify as implementing elements of the Information Technology Infrastructure Library ("ITIL") framework, a popular framework for IT Service Management ("ITSM") that focuses on the design, strategy, operations, measurement, improvement and delivery of IT services within an organization. While each stage of ITIL is self-contained, ITIL focuses on service strategy and design so individual best practices cannot successfully be implemented and considered implementation of the ITIL framework. Several staff within DOIT have ITIL 3 certifications and are familiar with the framework and the stages.

Business Relationship Management

There are no staff dedicated to establishing proactive, collaborative business relationships with end-user departments, to assist in strategic planning and business case identification and development. Some IT Project Managers may have built relationships that have resulted in these activities, but it is not a formal effort or departmental strategy, and leading practice separates the PMO from the business relationship management function.

PMO and Acquisition Governance

As previously noted, there is no governance that requires end-user departments to engage with the PMO for the implementation of new systems, or for significant system upgrades that may change business processes, use case, or other components of the user interface. The PMO also lacks a consistent streamlined process for end-users to request assistance, such as a standard intake form; currently some end-users may submit a help desk ticket requesting support while others email contacts within the Strategic Support Division for assistance. The PMO is using a combination of Smartsheets and Microsoft Teams for project management. SharePoint also serves as a repository for project artifacts, and general project phase and status tracking.

The lack of acquisition governance often means that DOIT finds out about acquisitions after the fact, and then must assume responsibility for paying for support and contract expenses that are not forecasted or budgeted, and in some instances the vendor-provided estimates are inaccurate. The lack of collaboration with Finance and Purchasing has resulted in a current state where departments can purchase individual licenses for common office software such as Grammarly, Adobe Acrobat Pro, or Canva. There is no centralized tracking, so the County may be paying for duplicate or dormant licenses. Additionally, as many users are incorrectly purchasing individual licenses, the costs to rectify this and convert to an Enterprise license often falls into the DOIT budget.

For end-user departments that collaborate with the PMO for project implementation, there can be challenges in dedicating adequate resources to the project management process. The PMO is not currently staffed to provide dedicated workflow documentation and business process validation support to its customers, and end-user departments often do not have staff to dedicate to complete capture. End users also may not realize the time and intentionality required for successful project management and system/application implementation. DOIT staff report that some departments, such as Watershed Management, have internal staff dedicated to documentation support, which may help with successful project management for those departments.

Post-Implementation Support

Once new applications have been implemented, administration of the application is typically transferred to the Business Solutions Services Division. These teams provide support to the application and its end-users. As the County has transitioned to more vendor-supported services, their workload has shifted. Several teams are also still reliant on post-implementation consultant support. The HRIS and ERP teams, both supporting elements of CV360, still have third-party implementation support assisting with application management, configuration, and reporting development.

Cloud-first Server Strategy

DOIT has adopted a cloud-first position for servers, with a secondary emphasis on vendor-supported applications where it is viable. DOIT estimates that there are currently 200 servers on premises, leveraging a VMWare environment. The stated goal is to shut down all physical servers by the fourth quarter of 2025.

The Platform Technologies team uses a number of monitoring and alert tools to ensure server uptime, and to help ensure that any outages are resolved quickly. Currently, staff in the Platform Technologies team are on an on-call schedule to assist with resolving outages and issues after-hours.

Data Governance and Security

The Department has successfully developed strong infrastructure, segmentation, and firewall protections. However, there is no data governance committee or oversight body to provide guidance on access to, storage of, and permissions around data.

DOIT utilizes industry standard practices for securing the County's devices, networks, and data. DOIT is using Microsoft Sentinel for the enterprise operating environment, and the County's Independent Internal Auditor conducted a NIST 800-53 assessment in 2022. NIST 800-53 is an industry standard assessment for cybersecurity position.

DOIT also uses the DLP solutions for Microsoft 365, sending a notice to individuals who may not use appropriate procedures, to help prevent the unencrypted or unsecured transfer of sensitive data, such as personally identifiable information being transmitted via unsecure email to outside parties. If leadership or management within end-user departments request exemptions from security positions, such as limited use of own device, Department staff report that the expectation is that these exemptions will generally be granted. If granted, DOIT lacks any liability acknowledgement form, or formal process to track individuals with exceptions, or document the request and determination of eligible reason for the waiver.

DOIT uses the NIST framework for cybersecurity position, along with the Criminal Justice Information System and Payment Card Industry protocols. This combination reflects industry standard cybersecurity framework for a county like DeKalb. From a security position, the Department has led limited disaster recovery or cyberattack tabletops and lacks the preponderance of skills internally to allow for internal penetration testing or the development of red and blue teams. Quarterly the Atlanta Regional Commission's Urban Area Security Initiative Program ("UASI") program runs some testing for the Department, and as of the time of M&J's fieldwork, the Department reported being under a red team audit, which simulates a real-world hacker attack. Staff also report that a tabletop exercise will be conducted in April of 2025.

The Department has not selected nor begun implementation of a zero trust security strategy, which is a strategy that operates on the principle of “never trust, always verify” when it comes to access to the network. It does, however, have a number of preventive protocols in place. Staff report that there is a Host-based Intrusion Prevention Systems (“HIPS”) which sits on top of the firewall to prevent any device from joining the network that does not meet the County’s requirements for systems, anti-virus, and other security specifications. HIPS is not fully deployed across the County currently.

The Department lacks any group or position that is considering an intentional, safe use of emerging technologies within end-user departments. This absence, combined with the lack of acquisition or data governance, puts the County at risk for end-user departments purchasing chatbots or other AI features and then utilizing County data, or attempting to provide access to County network or databases, without adequate safety nets or limitations. While there are a number of protocols and frameworks that should help prevent this level of access, risks still persist. Emerging technologies also introduce opportunities to realize additional productivity gains and operating efficiencies, both within DOIT as well as within end-user departments.

DOIT is not an active or consistent participant in the purchasing and contracting function of the County. Leading practice includes governance that requires DOIT and oversight committee approval of most technology purchases and upgrades, and would also include a DOIT and Legal collaboratively developed set of contract terms and conditions that include security and access provisions.

DOIT has a robust network position, with lit fiber, redundant internet service provider (“ISP”) backbones, and strong segmentation and internal firewalls for the network. The network has also been transitioned to a more load balanced environment, with multiple points of redundancy to ensure access and minimized downtime.

Additional Duties and Responsibilities

Helpdesk and Desktop Support

The IT Enterprise Technicians serving as initial support for end-users take the majority of end-user requests via phone call, and then log the call into Zoho Service Desk, creating a help desk ticket. IT Enterprise Technicians are expected to triage and troubleshoot as many of the calls as viable while taking the calls, which results in queue times for calls that may extend beyond an hour. There is also an after-hours on call support for certain County functions, such as public safety, watershed management, and sanitation.

Additionally, a number of departments and constitutional officials have their own internal IT support who reach out to the help desk for assistance in troubleshooting and resolving issues.

The Supervisor and IT Manager are expected to monitor the queue and assign tickets, both to their internal staff, as well as other staff (within DOIT or elsewhere in the County) if the ticket fails to automatically route to the correct group.

Application Management and Support

The Business Solutions Division is responsible for managing the majority of the County's applications. Where possible, DOIT staff assist end-user departments in developing reports, resolving bugs or issues, or ensuring that the applications are configured in the correct workflow and manner for the end-users. The Business Solutions Division also ensures that the County is using the most current version of applications, coordinating updates and upgrades. Several of the units also rely on project consultants to assist with these duties. The ERP and HRIS was recently converted to a cloud-based Oracle product, known as CV360, and both the ERP and HRIS teams still utilize third-party integration consultants to assist with configuration, report development, and other troubleshooting support. End users typically submit help desk tickets to request assistance with issues, configuration, or needs to develop reports. Division staff then either work the ticket themselves or liaise with the project consultant or vendor to resolve the request.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

DOIT provided M&J with copies of five policies:

- Change Management Policy (last updated 2018)
- Criminal Justice Information System Security Policy (last updated 12/2024)
- DeKalb Acceptable Use Policy (last updated 4/2022)
- IT Security Policy (last updated 5/2024)
- Third Party Contract Policy (as it relates to Personally Identifiable Information)

The five policies listed above are all appropriate policies to have in place, but is not a comprehensive set of policies. Additionally, some of the policies, such as the Acceptable Use Policy, require additional support and enforcement from end-user department leadership. Use of ITIL and/or NIST frameworks would assist in performing gap analysis and identifying other policies that would create additional guidelines and protections for the County.

Several division leaders have created processes for their teams as well as for end-users, such as the application change management process, the cybersecurity incident management process, daily tasks lists or instructions for how end-users can use the password reset portal. These are individual efforts, however, and are highly dependent on the availability and interest of the unit leadership or staff to maintain those documents. For enterprise-wide, or business critical applications, DOIT and contractors have developed a number of process guides and walk-through documents. Applications that have been in place for some time, or those that may have been implemented for a single department, may not have the same availability of process guides or other guiding documentation.

Within the security space, DOIT has general processes for incident response, but lack more comprehensive plans, such as resiliency plans or comprehensive disaster recovery/continuity of operations plans.

Without the underpinning of adequate governance, these policies may be more challenging to implement and consistently enforce. During interviews, staff reported that individuals may be given the "okay" to not adhere to policies, but there are not documented waivers or forms acknowledging the potential for risk or liability for failing to comply with policies.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

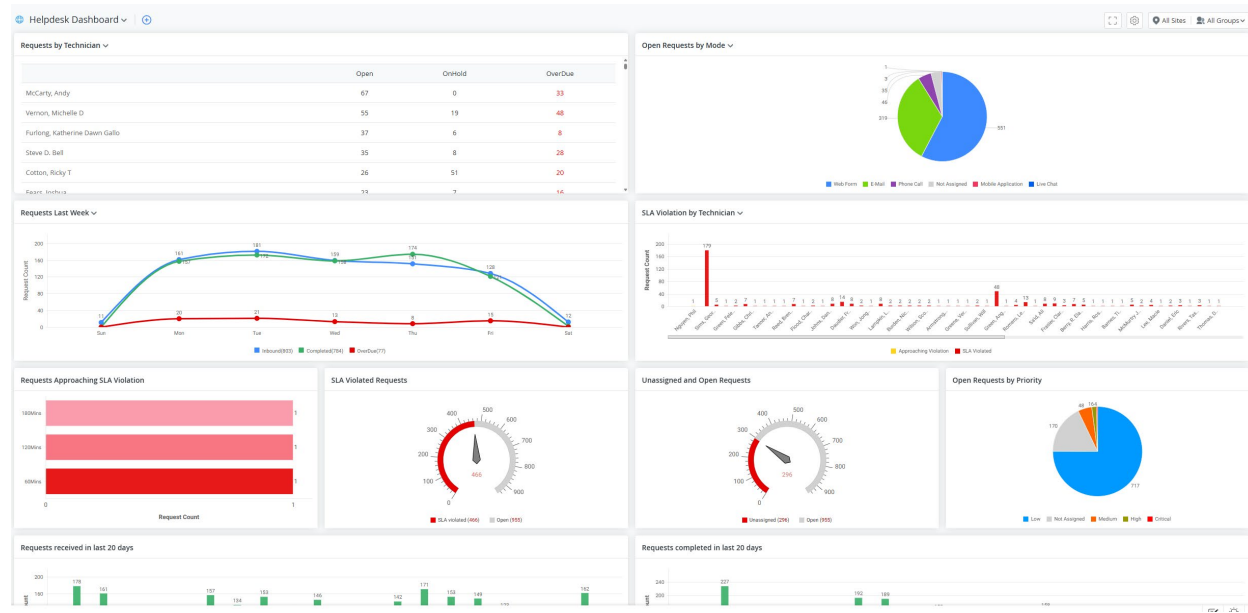
The Department does not consistently utilize common industry benchmarks for service delivery and maintenance, although the metrics may be tracked by individual divisions and through current Department systems. The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

Zoho Service Desk includes an activities dashboard, that tracks a number of metrics for specific categories of requests, such as overdue tasks, number of open requests, on hold requests, and open tasks. The dashboard also tracks request inflow over the last 24 hours, 7 days, and 30 days, to assist in assessing volume.

The Platform Technologies team has goals of two days or less from end-user department request to the creation of new accounts for newly hired and/or onboarded staff. They also monitor their tickets in Service Desk. Service Desk allows for DOIT to set service level agreements (“SLAs”) for ticket management within the system. The IT Manager over this unit runs reports reviewing for the categories of tickets that are their responsibility, reviewing for number of newly created tickets, number of tickets closed, and the general age of tickets within their responsibility.

Similarly, the Business Solutions unit is utilizing the Zoho Service Desk dashboard to track unit performance in addressing tickets and tasks. This division has an informal goal of initial response and assessment of the issue within 24-48 hours of ticket assignment.

Zoho Service Desk also has helpdesk dashboard tracking. A screenshot provided by the Department follows.



The PMO may informally track phase status and budgeted to actual for projects, but this is not consistently reviewed or reported to end-user departments. The PMO may want to introduce datapoints to allow tracking project performance, such as completion within the allotted timeframe, resource allocation, or budget. Longer-term, the PMO may want to consider introducing value mapping or value realization, to better evaluate process improvement through the PMO, or the enhanced value of new or upgraded products or services.

The Department does monitor security and network uptime and security stance, through the use of tools and third parties. Layer3, a contractor, also conducts quarterly business reviews to assess uptime and performance.

For some of the enterprise-wide, or larger system implementations or upgrades, such as the recent migration to CV360, the Department has reportedly used customer service surveys to assess the effectiveness of the implementation, as well as any continued issues, concerns, or training needs.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

The current state of the Department's culture is challenging. The lack of engagement and buy-in from end-user departments can be demoralizing for DOIT employees, who have expressed a desire to want to perform their jobs competently and to help position the County for current and future success. Some employees have stronger relationships with their end-users, and have a better sense of the meaningful impact and support they are able to provide.

The lack of proactive, collaborative communications between DOIT and its end-user departments can put DOIT in the tenuous position of being asked to support systems, services, and software that it did not participate in the purchase or implementation of, which can create challenges from a staffing resource as well as a budgetary perspective. There may also be challenges with the suitability of the solution within the DeKalb County environment. End-user departments also report varying levels of awareness and understanding about upcoming upgrades, updates, or changes.

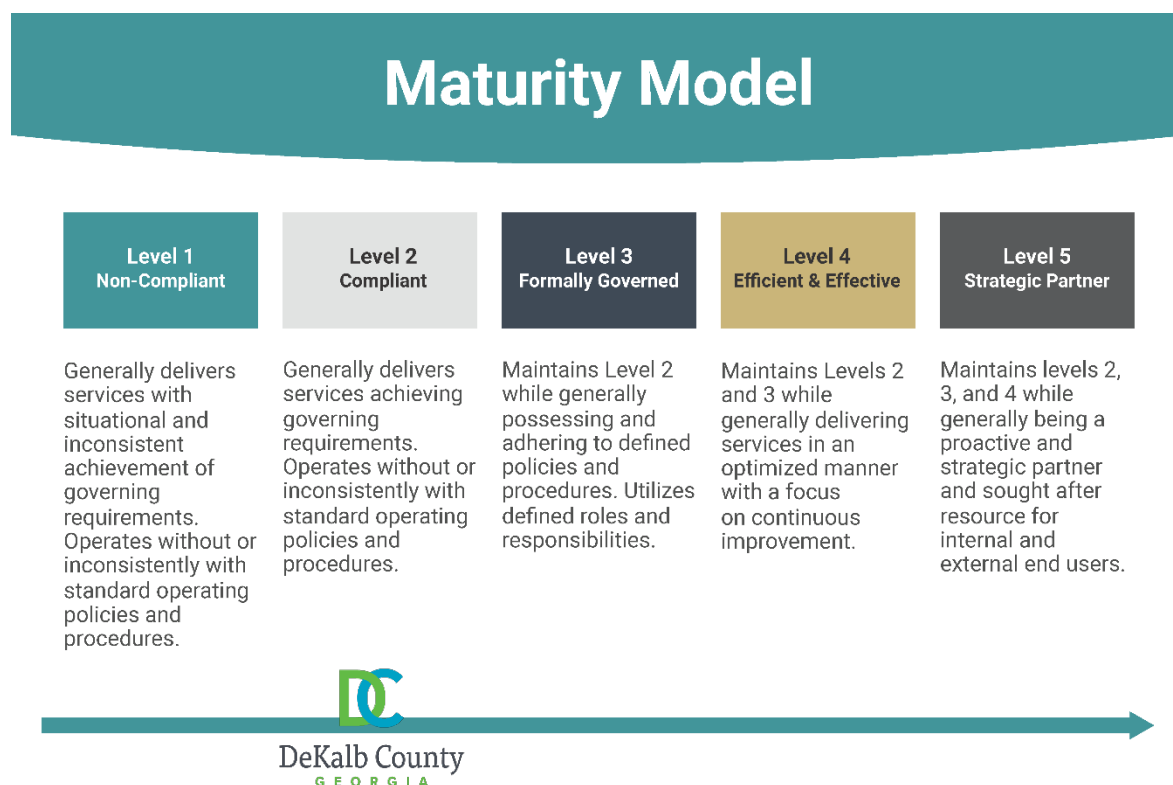
The Department operates in silos; some individuals may have forged proactive working relationships with employees within other divisions, but staff report there was not an effort from prior leadership to foster collaboration and awareness of initiatives and efforts within divisions that may have broader impacts. Individual teams may have regular touchpoints or check-ins, but there aren't more collaborative or proactive cross-divisional discussions or touchpoints. There may be discussions around environment changes within applications or upgrade to servers or the Microsoft domain that may have additional impacts on other teams or end-users, but these are not consistently deployed throughout the Department, and may not be communicated early enough to allow for adequate preparation, planning, and communication to impacted end-users. The lack of intentional communications and collaboration has created an environment where divisions may not trust the experience and efforts of other divisions, or feel that their own role and efforts are not appreciated or respected.

End-user departments report that they may have a specific person who is their direct liaison or contact for break-fix or troubleshooting assistance, but there was limited expression of confidence and trust in the Department as a whole.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition
DeKalb was in the Top 10 in the 2024 Digital Counties Survey Winners for counties with populations between 500,000 and 999,999. In 2024 DeKalb also won the Tyler Excellence Award for Performance and Innovation for their justice information system transition to a cloud-based, secure, platform.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 2: Compliant.

Evaluating the organizational maturity for DOIT can be challenging; the Department is aligned, or even ahead, of a number of industry leading practices, especially around security position, cloud-first application hosting, and network redundancy. Unfortunately, these efforts are not underpinned by strong governance procedures or comprehensive strategic planning. The lack of governance has exposed the County to risk, eroded trust, possibly resulted in inefficient use of funds and resources, and created confusion around information technology responsibilities. The lack of governance or oversight authority has resulted in decentralized authority, with end-user departments able to establish their own chains of authority or workflow. Many end user departments have defaulted to mostly reactive communications with DOIT, and may not view them as a strategic partner.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: Database Administration is currently housed within the Business Solutions Division, with application support. Database administration is more commonly aligned with infrastructure functions.

Recommendation 1: DOIT should reorganize the database administration team to be housed in the Infrastructure Division.

Observation 2: DOIT's limited use of titles may result in misalignment between title and role, and may result in inconsistent use of titles among divisions within DOIT. Competition for employees against private industry makes recruitment and retention an additional challenge.

Recommendation 2: DOIT should work with the selected vendor for the Classification and Compensation Study to ensure titling is reviewed and aligned to better match current job duties, as well as industry standards. Additionally, the County should consider benchmarking DOIT positions against comparable private sector positions. This broadened benchmarking will provide the County with additional market industry data, and may allow DOIT to enhance its marketing to and targeting of workers, as well as consider compensation and incentive structures more competitive with the broader market for these employees.

Observation 3: The 2024-2027 DOIT Strategic Plan lacks actionable strategic (as opposed to operational) tactics. Many of the identified tactics also lack quantifiable goals or means for adequate progress tracking.

Recommendation 3: DOIT should develop a new strategic plan aligned with the new administration's strategic priorities. The strategic plan should focus on both strategic goals as well as actions, and meaningful interim actionable items and timelines. DOIT's strategic planning process should include input from employees at all levels of the Department, and may want to consider end-user input as well.

Observation 4: The County lacks enterprise-wide governance policies, both from an acquisition standpoint as well as from a data standpoint. The lack of enterprise-wide governance and oversight may require data governance policy, if not a data governance committee to review and set policies and other decisions around data governance.

Recommendation 4: DOIT should work with County leadership to develop and implement governance policies that define the process that will require end-user departments to identify the need for a new or upgraded technology, how the departments will collaborate with DOIT to develop business needs and gather requirements, and ensure that there is both functional and strategic proactive review and decision-making before any proposed purchases or upgrades.

For data governance, DOIT may need to hire a consultant or facilitator to conduct data governance workshops to inventory and classify the County's current data capture processes as well as current data storage environment. Once this inventory is completed, the County should establish a data governance committee to set policies around management of the County's sensitive data.

Depending on volume of requests after the first year, there may be a need to evaluate introducing subject matter specific governance groups, such as a judicial committee.

Observation 5: Currently, end-user departments can purchase applications, software, and services without consulting with DOIT. There are redundant applications that may provide the same type of service, and there may be multiple instances of the same application, system or software.

Recommendation 5: DOIT needs to conduct a systems and applications inventory of the County, including any purchases or implementations in-progress. Based on the results of the inventory, DOIT should conduct redundancy and fit-gap analysis to understand if configuration is needed to make the purchased solution more viable, or if another solution already implemented within the County would meet the end-users' needs. DOIT may want to consider a third-party software rationalization assessment to accomplish these objectives. Based on the results of this assessment, DOIT should work with County leadership to determine which applications should be retained by the County, and consolidate duplicative software to reduce costs and improve governance. As applicable, DOIT should also assess whether transitioning some applications to a different environment (SaaS, PaaS, IaaS or hybrid) would be more beneficial for the County.

Once a governance framework and appropriate committees are established, DOIT will need to work with Finance, Purchasing & Contracting, and the Office of Management and Budget to ensure adherence to procedures for the purchase or upgrade of systems and applications.

Observation 6: DOIT is not currently implementing a management framework at the Department level. Management frameworks help ensure focus is on end-to-end service delivery and help reduce the prevalence of individual component management practices.

Recommendation 6: DOIT should consider implementing ITIL 3. While ITIL 4 is the newer framework, ITIL 3's focus on process is key for initial capture, consistency development, and change management buy-in. Additionally, several DOIT staff are already certified in ITIL 3 standards. ITIL 4 may provide more flexibility and adaptability in the future, but in the current state that flexibility will create more opportunities for continued work-arounds and non-adherence to the model.

Observation 7: DOIT does not have a role dedicated to building relationships with the end-user departments to learn about their needs and provide additional support in business case development and needs definition. While PMO IT Project Managers may be informally building relationships, industry leading practice is to have the PMO staff separate from the business relationship staff.

Recommendation 7: DOIT should establish a Business Relationship Manager (and/or Business Relationship Analyst) role, focused on building relationships with end-user departments and serving as an initial point of contact when considering the need for new or upgraded solutions, and ensuring alignment on business objectives. These roles should be leveraged to foster more consistently positive relationships, and ensuring enhanced communication and collaboration between DOIT and the end-user departments.

Observation 8: While DOIT has developed a number of processes related to disaster recovery and incident management response, DOIT does not maintain a comprehensive Disaster Recovery Plan.

Recommendation 8a: DOIT should create a Business Impact Analysis of current applications, identifying assessing the applications' Recovery Time Objective ("RTO") and Recovery Point Objective ("RPO").

Recommendation 8b: Once a Business Impact Analysis is completed, DOIT should document and test a Disaster Recovery Plan that defines how DOIT will recover services in the event of a disaster, including recovery prioritization and estimated time frame. The Disaster Recovery Plan should be tested annually with a disaster recovery tabletop exercise, which can be used to refine the Disaster Recovery Plan.

Observation 9: Currently, DOIT does not have procedures or a committee to ensure oversight and standardization in the County's potential adoption of emerging technologies, such as Generative AI or chatbots.

Recommendation 9: DOIT should identify internal positions, and potentially a committee, to assist in the development of a standardized evaluation procedure to evaluate new or emerging technologies, including the benefits, risks, and potential costs. Development should include a proactive methodology and template for analysis, and for communication with end-users about expected notification and implementation processes.

Once these procedures have been established, DOIT may want to evaluate the current application environment to identify where there may be opportunities for enhanced productivity with the introduction of appropriate and beneficial emerging technologies.

Observation 10: Currently, DOIT does not have standardized sets of terms and conditions for use in a contracts or agreements that include data rights and/or network access. Staff report that Purchasing and Contracting may reach out to request review or language support, but this is not formal or consistent.

Recommendation 10: DOIT should work with the County's attorneys and the Purchasing and Contracting Department to establish language for third-party contracts that include storing of, or access to, DeKalb County data. Required terms and conditions should include required notification about cyberbreaches, introduce penalties for failure to comply with contractual notification periods, and could consider required reporting about results of SOC 2 or other applicable audits. All current applicable contracts should be audited to identify where this language is required, and updates or verifications of terms should be completed during contract renewal periods.

Observation 11a: The Enterprise Technology Center relies on the use of staff in an on-call position for 24x7 help desk support for key public safety and critical infrastructure needs. Additionally, the Center operates a call-based model with immediate troubleshooting and support.

Observation 11b: Many of the end-users requiring help desk support call the help desk to speak with an Enterprise IT Technician who logs their issue and provides immediate troubleshooting support. This is not an efficient use of Enterprise IT Technician time, and often results in extended wait times and triaging of issues based on order received, rather than issue prioritization.

Recommendation 11: DOIT needs to leverage a managed service provider (“MSP”) to supplement the help desk and ensure that the Enterprise IT Technicians are used for value-add service support, and not call-taking. The MSP should also be used for 24x7 service delivery. DOIT should consider using the Georgia Enterprise Technology Services (“GETS”) Center for managed services, or another statewide contact provider.

DOIT also needs to design a campaign that encourages end-users to submit issues to the help desk via online ticket submission, to ensure more appropriate triaging and addressing of issues based on prioritization and not intake order. DOIT may need to consider a fit-gap analysis of Zoho Service Desk, to ensure that the current configuration allows for timely and appropriate resolution of end-user issues, and also helps ensure an accessible and user-friendly customer experience.

Observation 12: Currently, there is a lack of consistent identification or tracking of SLAs across the department.

Recommendation 12: DOIT should inventory available data with Zoho Service Desk, the Network Operations Center, and the Security Operations Center, to understand what can be benchmarked and leveraged moving forward. Once the new DOIT Strategic Plan is developed, inventoried data should be evaluated to determine what data points could be leveraged to assist in quantifying progress towards strategic priorities.

Observation 13: DOIT has lost the trust of end-user departments, who have become empowered to hire their own IT staff, and opt out of DOIT processes or policies. End-users report inconsistent communication and a lack of timely communications from DOIT.

Recommendation 13a: DOIT need to establish a communications protocol and messaging calendar with end-users, including email blasts, newsletters, and recorded videos announcing and demonstrating changes in enterprise-wide applications and systems.

Recommendation 13b: Once foundational elements have been established and DOIT has demonstrated value to end-users and reestablished trust, DOIT should consider a true shared services model, which could centralize and consolidate all IT resources and functions into DOIT, to help improve efficiency, cost effectiveness, and service quality.

Conclusion

DOIT has not been viewed as a strategic and collaborative partner in some time, and the current environment has negatively impacted the morale of employees, who want to help create and maintain a safe, effective, and productive IT environment for County employees, visitors, and stakeholders. DOIT will need to take quick action to begin regaining control of the IT environment and repositioning itself as a valued partner for end-user departments.

We would like to thank the CIO for his time and resources, and the staff for their assistance in obtaining documentation, and the opportunity to meet with 25 employees and shadow a portion of daily helpdesk operations.

3.L Medical Examiner's Office

Introduction

The Medical Examiner's Office ("Office") mission is to provide comprehensive forensic death investigation and postmortem examination concerning all manners of death for people within DeKalb County. The Office sees themselves as "advocates of the dead". The Office serves the community by utilizing the knowledge of forensic science and medicine to investigate deaths that constitute a concern to the health and safety of the public.

Organization

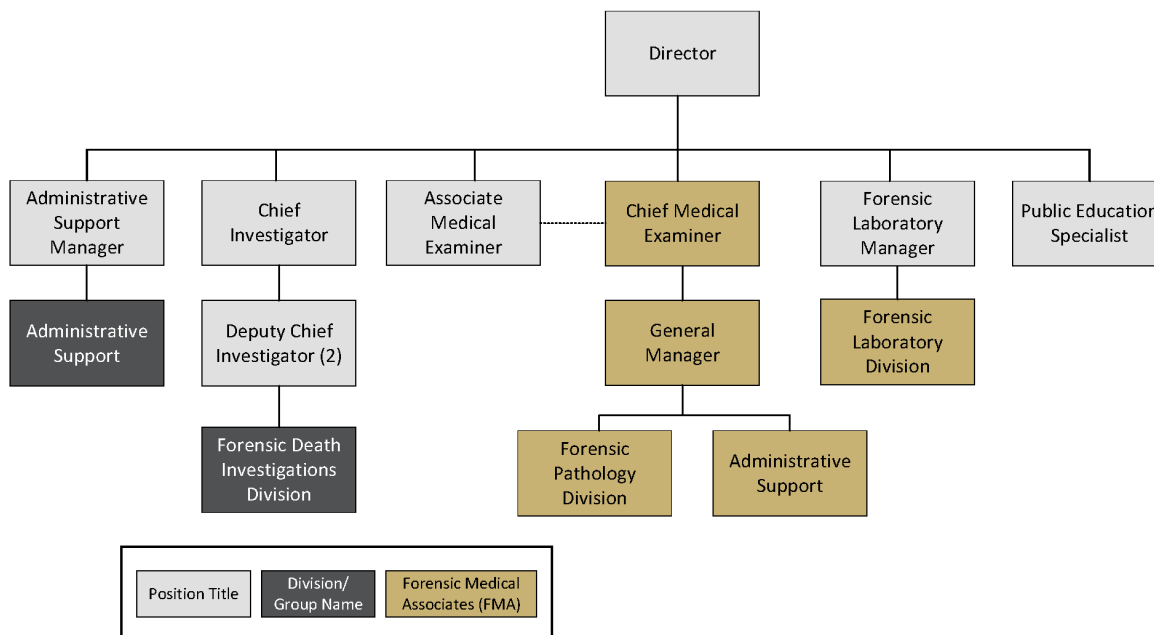
The Medical Examiner's Office maintains a Public-Private Partnership ("PPP") with Forensic Medicine Associates ("FMA") to provide scientific staff of board-certified forensic pathologists, pathologists' assistants, forensic technicians, and administrative staff who work collaboratively with the County to conduct comprehensive investigations into sudden, unexpected, or suspicious deaths. This is the only PPP of its kind in the country and the Office is seen as a leader amongst its peers.

The Office is overseen by a Director who started with the County in late 2024 and possesses significant experience serving in various roles in multiple medical examiner's offices including at the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. The Director oversees Office operations including County and FMA employees. There are a total of 21 County positions and 19 FMA positions within the Office.

County employee positions include: Director, Associate Medical Examiner, Chief Investigator, Deputy Chief Investigator (2), Forensic Death Investigators (9), Forensic Laboratory Manager, Administrative Support Manager, Office Assistant, Records Custodian, Medical Transcriptionist, Administrative Specialist, and a Public Education Specialist.

FMA employee positions include: Chief Medical Examiner, General Manager, Deputy Chief Medical Examiner, Associate Medical Examiner (4), Pathologist's Assistant (3), Forensic Laboratory Technician (5), Project Manager, Fellowship Program Manager, Education Coordinator, and a Legal Administrative Assistant.

The following chart shows the organizational structure for the Office:



Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

Strategic Priorities

In 2022 the Office developed a list of strategic goals, objectives, and measures. Many of the goals and objectives relate to reducing inefficiencies, expanding relationships/networks, enhancing employee satisfaction, upgrading vehicles, and expanding the facilities. The strategic goals included the following six goals:

- Goal 1: Improve Customer Service and Workplace Productivity
- Goal 2: Invest in Employee Growth and Advancement
- Goal 3: Invest in the Enhancement of County Assets
- Goal 4: Maintain Fiscal Discipline
- Goal 5: Promote Forensic Science and Medico-Legal Investigations
- Goal 6: Research, Analyze, and Report any Emerging Trends

Based on fieldwork, certain goals have been achieved and certain goals remain unachieved. As Office leadership has changed since goal development it is unknown if the goals were created with defined actions steps and how actively goal progress was monitored. The current Office Director took the position in late 2024 and plans to create a more formal Office Strategic Plan in 2025. Any future Strategic Plan should include specific actions, assigned ownership, methods to measure success, and periodic updates as to reviewing the status of the goals.

Key Duties and Responsibilities

The Office investigates deaths as required by law to be reported to the DeKalb County Medical Examiner's Office and fall under the jurisdiction of the Georgia Death Investigation Act, O.C.G.A. § 45-16-24. This includes deaths involving violence, accidents, suicide, sudden or suspicious circumstances, children under the age of 7, executions, inmates, hospital admittance within 24 hours where the patient never gained consciousness, or when a physician is unable to sign a death certificate. As required by this law, death cases are reported seven days a week, 24 hours a day, including weekends and all holidays.

The Office's inquiry is required on all deaths that come within the purview of the law. The inquiry may include, but is not limited to:

- Obtaining a detailed history on the decedent and the circumstances surrounding the event
- Scene investigation
- Evidence collection
- Scene reconstruction
- External examination
- Limited dissection or autopsy
- Post-autopsy investigation including laboratory studies

Once the cause and manner of death are determined, a death certificate is issued.

Key Office functional areas/divisions include the following:

- Investigations
- Forensic Pathology and the Forensic Laboratory
- Administrative Support
- Public Education

Investigations

The Investigations function is led by a Chief Investigator who is supported by two Deputy Chief Investigators and nine Forensic Death Investigators. Investigators go to a scene to either secure the scene if not secured already by law enforcement, and to obtain information about the deceased from witnesses and/or family members such as medical history and, drug history (if applicable). The investigators also take photos of the scene and the deceased.

The investigators often interact with the County Police Department and multiple Office employees stated that the relationship between the Office and Police Department is strong. Recently, the Police Department added a four hour course within the Police Academy related to the Office's roles, responsibilities, and supporting functions between the Office and the Police Department.

The investigators work over 3 shifts, providing 24 hours coverage, seven days a week. The investigators use vehicles to travel to scenes and leverage laptops and cell phones to access the Medicolegal Death Investigation Case Management System (“MDI”) while in the field. During interviews it was noted that many of the Office’s vehicles are smaller electric vehicles which aren’t necessarily conducive to the roles of the investigators which may require significant driving from scene to scene as well as needing larger vehicles to store the equipment needed while on a scene.

Investigators take on cases that occur while on shift. The cases stay with the assigned investigator until completion, which is typically when the cause of death is determined.

Forensic Pathology and the Forensic Laboratory

The Forensic Pathology function is performed by FMA in conjunction with the County; FMA staff include a Chief Medical Examiner, a Deputy Chief Medical Examiner, four Associate Medical Examiners, and three Pathologists’ Assistants. The function includes investigating deaths, performing autopsies, analyzing evidence, determining the cause and manner of death, and providing expert testimony as necessary. A significant portion of the forensic pathology work takes place in the Forensic Laboratory.

The Forensic Laboratory is overseen by a Forensic Laboratory Manager and supported by five FMA Forensic Laboratory Technicians. The Forensic Laboratory Manager and Technicians are skilled in forensic photography and radiology, laboratory procedure, medical nomenclature, and anatomy. Typical Forensic Laboratory procedures include the following:

- Conducting autopsies
- Drawing blood samples
- Documenting evidence
- Collecting latent fingerprints
- Procuring x-rays
- Collecting and preserving evidence for forensic analysis
- Overseeing the release of decedents to funeral homes

The Laboratory Manager oversees the lab and is in charge of laboratory personnel, chain of custody, safety, transportation of evidence, and the procedures performed in the laboratory. The Laboratory Manager oversees all personnel in the laboratory and signs off on all documents related to procedures and evidence. The laboratory is capable of performing initial drug/alcohol screens in-house to detect the presence of drugs or alcohol, but leverages a third-party vendor for quantitative analysis (assessing the degree or magnitude of drugs or alcohol present).

Administrative Support

The Administrative Support function primarily consists of records management, transcription services, and general Office administrative duties.

Records management is performed by a Records Custodian who is responsible for the creation, maintenance, storage, and disposal of records. Records are maintained for 12 years after the case is closed before being archived. The Records Technician maintains both hardcopy files (as required by law for death certificates, autopsy reports, and investigation reports) as well as digital files through Medicolegal Death Investigation Case Management System (“MDI”). The Records Technician is also responsible for completing death certificates based on information provided by the Chief Medical Examiner and inputs information from the death certificate into the Georgia Vital Events Registration System (“GAVERS”).

Transcription services are performed by a Medical Transcriptionist. The Medical Examiner and other staff dictate notes and findings during an autopsy using a digital dictation device where notes are sent to the Medical Transcriptionist. The Medical Transcriptionist transcribes the notes into Word documents that are included in reports needed by families, courts, law enforcement, and insurance companies. There is an internal goal to transcribe notes within 48 hours once received by the Medical Transcriptionist, but notes are often transcribed within 24 hours.

Public Education

The Public Education function consists of a single Public Education Specialist whose primary purpose is to educate the public on the Office’s mission, and promotes public health, life-saving prevention efforts, and different career options in the forensics pathology field. The Office collects and maintains a significant amount of data related to causes of deaths in the County (homicide, drug use, etc.) – opioid use was a leading cause of death in recent years. As such, the Public Education Specialist is able to tailor presentations and education materials to speak at schools, community events, and other County gatherings to better inform and educate the public of certain dangers. The Public Education Specialist also helps the community better understand the roles of medical examiner offices and all the possible career paths within the field.

The Public Education Specialist typically presents at the following types of venues:

- Safety and awareness experiences
- STEM and science-based classes and events
- Forensic and Criminal Justice programs
- Master of Public Health programs
- Medical School classes and events
- Career Fairs and career-oriented events

Typical presentation topics include:

- The Role of the Medical Examiner’s office
- Different departments and Careers within the Office
- Medicolegal Death Investigation
- The Forensic Lab: Postmortem Examinations and Additional Testing
- Death Certification
- Opioid Awareness and Prevention

The Public Education Specialist has also created and maintains engagement on multiple social media platforms to provide public health and medicolegal educational information.

The role of a Public Education Specialist is fairly unique for a medical examiner's office, but based on M&J fieldwork and analysis, the function appears to be a good investment by leveraging Office data to better educate the public as well as serving as a recruiting method within a field that does not have enough practitioners to meet demands nationally.

Facilities

During the course of fieldwork, it was observed that the Medical Examiner's Office is running out of space – both in terms of office space and laboratory space. The facility is approaching 30 years of life and is 18,238 square feet including an autopsy suite of 1,200 square feet which holds 18 autopsy tables. As the population in DeKalb has grown over the years, and is projected to still grow, there is a direct impact on the number of cases handled by the office. The current facility has no extra office capacity (unless people share an office) as all offices are currently occupied and even a former closet has been turned into a make-shift office.

DeKalb County's average annual population from the past five years was 763,163 and the Office's average annual case load was 2,399 cases. Based on Atlanta Regional Commission estimations, DeKalb County's population will grow to approximately 880,195 by 2050. In order to begin planning for the current and continued growth in population, and growth in Office case load, the County should begin planning for the expansion of the current Office facility or development of a new facility. Any planned expansion or development should allow for future growth in both personnel (office space) and case load (laboratory space).

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

The Office maintains robust documentation for its policies and procedures. The Office has created "Statements of Policy, Procedure, and Practice" for each specific area of Office operations which are well organized and available to all employees. The Statements of Policy, Procedure, and Practice are very detailed and easy to understand. Original implementation dates, revision dates, and Office Director and Chief Medical Examiner signatures are included on each Statement of Policy, Procedure, and Practice. The Statements of Policy, Procedure, and Practice were last reviewed and signed off on in October of 2023. The current Director is in the process of reviewing the Statements of Policy, Procedure, and Practice to see if any revisions are needed.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Office tracks a significant amount of data related to activities, outcomes, and performance measures. Data is also proactively analyzed to identify trends or concerns related to public safety and then used by the Public Education Specialist to bring further awareness and prevention strategies into community.

The Office tracks activities such as listed below, and are not representative of all metrics tracked by the Office:

- Number of deaths reported
- Number of cases by manner of death (accident, homicide, natural, suicide, undetermined, pending)
- Number of autopsies (full and limited) performed by manner of death (homicide, suicide, non-motor vehicle accidents, motor-vehicle accidents, natural deaths, undetermined)
- Number of limited dissections by manner of death

- Number of external examinations by manner of death
- Death certificates issued by manner of death
- Scene visits
- Cases/procedures performed by each doctor by manner of death
- Death type by age, race, and gender
- Cases assigned by investigator

The Office also tracks performance against the National Accreditation of Medical Examiners (“NAME”) Accreditation Checklist, for which the Office has achieved accreditation through October 2027. The checklists include specific working conditions and environments that must be maintained as well as numerous performance measures. NAME performance measures that the Office tracks include the following, but are not limited to:

- Annual statistical reporting
- Cases reviewed by a medical examiner within 24 hours of jurisdiction release
- 90% of autopsies performed within 48 hours of receipt
- 90% of toxicology examinations completed within 60 calendar days of case submission
- 90% of reports of postmortem examinations completed with 90 calendar days from the time of autopsy

The Office’s performance tracking is robust and meets NAME accreditation standards for which the Office has received accreditation. As of the date of M&J fieldwork, only less than 5% of medical examiner/coroner offices throughout the United States have achieved NAME accreditation.

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

Based on numerous interviews and shadowing of certain functions, it is apparent that the culture and work environment is positive within the Office. As the nature of the work performed by the Office is important, sensitive, and emotional, Office employees seemed to have formed a bond and work well together. It is clear that Office employees are passionate about their jobs and recognize the impact their actions have on County citizens and stakeholders.

The PPP relationship between the County and FMA seems to be working effectively and all employees appear to integrate well and supporting a common mission.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

The Office has achieved many positive accomplishments, some of which are unique to DeKalb County and are described below.

- The Office maintains a Public-Private Partnership (“PPP”) with Forensic Medicine Associates to provide scientific staff of board-certified forensic pathologists, pathologists' assistants, forensic technicians, and administrative staff who work collaboratively with the County to conduct comprehensive investigations into sudden, unexpected, or suspicious deaths. This is the only PPP of its kind in the country and the Office is seen as a leader amongst its peers.
- The Office is accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners (“NAME”). The accreditation process is voluntary but very robust and entails compliance with significant requirements, an inspection, and reviews of policies, facility maintenance, and public access areas. The Office achieved its initial accreditation in 2014, and a NAME inspection is required every 5 years to maintain accreditation; the last inspection was conducted in 2024. NAME sets a standard for the number of scenes per investigator, the number of postmortem examinations per physician, and the allotted timeframe for completion of reports. The Office had no deficiencies in its most recent assessment and performance metrics for investigative and pathology staff are within NAME standards.
- The Office actively works to receive grants to further improvements in the medical examiner/coroner system. Recent grants are described below:
 - CDC Foundation Grant (2023-2024): \$114,000. The Office was 1 of 15 Medical Examiner Offices nationally awarded CDC grant funds to modernize medical examiners data systems. The Office used innovative data modernization strategies to help pilot a public health data sharing interface that aligned with CDC data modernization initiatives.
 - Overdose Data 2 Action Grant (Annual award - 2020-2025) \$24,000-56,000. The Overdose Data 2 Action grant focuses on providing DeKalb funding for accidental overdoses. The grant pays for reporting and surveillance of synthetic (illicit) overdose data to the Georgia Department of Public Health violent death reporting programs.
 - Bureau of Justice Assistance Strengthening the Medical Examiner/Coroner System Program (2024-2027) \$94,104. In September 2024, the Office received funding to pursue accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (“ACGME”). ACGME accreditation will enable the Office to establish the first forensic pathology fellowship program with a Historically Black College or University. The first fellow will rotate through the Office in 2026.
 - CDC Foundation Grant (2025) \$54,692. The grant is for the Office to work with a private healthcare technology company to map their case management system data elements to Health Data Explorer. Once the elements have been mapped out, the Office will be able to explore multiple avenues for sharing and visualizing the data, such as a public-facing dashboard.

- Office staff are highly skilled and maintain regular ongoing learning and certifications.
 - One staff member is a physician and therefore subject to guidelines regarding continuing education via the Georgia Composite Medical Board, which requires 20 hours per year of continuing medical education.
 - The investigative staff (12 positions), Lab Manager (1 position) and Director of Operations (1 position) attend various conferences/training courses as scheduling and budget allows. In May 2025, an investigator will attend the University of Tennessee Forensic Anthropology Center's Outdoor Recovery Course, and another will attend the 2025 Georgia Coroners' Association Spring and Fall Meetings in April and September. The Director will attend the National Association of Medical Examiners' Annual Meeting in October 2025.
 - All investigators and the Lab Manager are Peace Officer Standards and Training ("POST") certified, which is a requirement of employment and requires 20 hours of annual training. Five investigators, including the Chief and a Deputy Chief Investigator, as well as the Director, are also POST Certified Instructors, which requires the completion of a specialized 80-hour course (minimum), and one of the investigators is a Certified Firearms Instructor.
 - All of the investigators attend various American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigator ("ABMDI") training courses, as scheduling and budget allow. The ABMDI have two levels of certification (Registry and Board Certified), and five investigators are Registry Certified, with two more sitting for examinations in the near future. The Director was previously Board Certified and is in the process of reinstatement.
 - The Director is in the process of obtaining National Incident Management System certification, which is also a condition of employment. The Director was hired in November 2024 and must obtain ABMDI Board Certification and NIMS Certification within one year.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.

Maturity Model

Level 1 Non-Compliant	Level 2 Compliant	Level 3 Formally Governed	Level 4 Efficient & Effective	Level 5 Strategic Partner
Generally delivers services with situational and inconsistent achievement of governing requirements. Operates without or inconsistently with standard operating policies and procedures.	Generally delivers services achieving governing requirements. Operates without or inconsistently with standard operating policies and procedures.	Maintains Level 2 while generally possessing and adhering to defined policies and procedures. Utilizes defined roles and responsibilities.	Maintains Levels 2 and 3 while generally delivering services in an optimized manner with a focus on continuous improvement.	Maintains levels 2, 3, and 4 while generally being a proactive and strategic partner and sought after resource for internal and external end users.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Office as Level 5: Strategic Partner. The Office is operating not only efficiently within its current capacity, but also is strategic in its delivery. The Office has implemented innovative approaches such as its Public-Private Partnership and the creation of a Public Education Specialist. As the County’s population continues to grow, and along with it, Office case load, the Office will need to ensure that it maintains the needed space, personnel, and vehicles to keep up with expected growth – if not, the Office would lose some of its current efficiency and effectiveness outcomes.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: The Medical Examiner's Office maintains a Public-Private Partnership (“PPP”) with Forensic Medicine Associates (“FMA”) to provide scientific staff of board-certified forensic pathologists, pathologists' assistants, forensic technicians, and administrative staff who work collaboratively with the County to conduct comprehensive investigations into sudden, unexpected, or suspicious deaths. This is the only PPP of its kind in the country and the Office is seen as a leader amongst its peers.

Recommendation 1: The Office and the County should continue its current PPP relationship based on historical performance and results.

Observation 2: The Statements of Policy, Procedure, and Practice were last reviewed and signed off on in October of 2023. The current Director is in the process of reviewing the Statements of Policy, Procedure, and Practice to see if any revisions are needed.

Recommendation 2: The Director should complete the review of the Statements of Policy, Procedure, and Practice to determine if any revisions are needed. If so, the revisions should be memorialized and shared with the appropriate Office personnel. If revisions are not needed, the Statements of Policy, Procedure, and Practice should be noted with a review date to indicate the date of last review.

Observation 3: In 2022 the Office developed a list of strategic goals, objectives, and measures. The current Office Director took position in late 2024 and plans to create a more formal Office Strategic Plan in 2025.

Recommendation 3: The Director should lead the effort to create a formal Strategic Plan in 2025. Any future Strategic Plan should include specific actions, assigned ownership, methods to measure success, and periodic updates as to reviewing the status of the goals. The Strategic Plan should be clearly disseminated and communicated to all Office personnel.

Observation 4: During interviews it was noted that many of the Office's vehicles are smaller electric vehicles which aren't necessarily conducive to the roles of the investigators which may require significant driving from scene to scene as well as needing larger vehicles to store the equipment needed while on a scene.

Recommendation 4: The Office should work with the Fleet Maintenance Division of the Public Works Department to obtain or plan for new and replacement vehicles conducive to the roles of investigators, and such approved plans should be integrated into the County's Vehicle Replacement Plan.

Observation 5: The role of a Public Education Specialist is fairly unique for a medical examiner's office, but based on M&J fieldwork and analysis, the function appears to be a good investment by leveraging Office data to better educate the public as well as serving as a recruiting method within a field that does not have enough practitioners to meet demands nationally.

Recommendation 5: The Office should continue the use of the Public Education Specialist and should consider growth opportunities related to public education based on demand and results.

Observation 6: During the course of fieldwork, it was observed that the Medical Examiner's Office is running out of space – both in terms of office space and laboratory space. The facility is approaching 30 years of life and is 18,238 square feet including an autopsy suite of 1,200 square feet which holds 18 autopsy tables. As the population in DeKalb has grown over the years, and is projected to still grow, there is a direct impact on the number of cases handled by the office. The current facility has no extra office capacity (unless people shared an office) as all offices are currently occupied and even a former closet has been turned into a make-shift office.

Recommendation 6: In order to begin planning for the current and continued growth in population, and growth in Office case load, the County should begin planning for the expansion of the current Office facility or development of a new facility. Any planned expansion or development should allow for future growth in both personnel (office space) and case load (laboratory space).

Observation 7: The Office is accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners ("NAME"). The accreditation process is voluntary but very robust and entails compliance with significant requirements, an inspection, and reviews of policies, facility maintenance, and public access areas. The Office's accreditation is valid through October 2027.

Recommendation 7: The Office should continue its efforts to maintain and achieve future NAME accreditation beyond October 2027.

Observation 8: The Director is in the process of obtaining National Incident Management System certification, which is also a condition of employment. The Director was hired in November 2024 and must obtain ABMDI Board Certification and NIMS Certification within one year.

Recommendation 8: The Director should ensure obtaining ABMDI Board Certification and NIMS Certification within the required time period.

Conclusion

The Medical Examiner's Office is operating not only efficiently within its current capacity, but also is strategic in its delivery. The Office has implemented innovative approaches such as its Public-Private Partnership and the creation of a Public Education Specialist. As the County's population continues to grow, and along with it, Office case load, the Office will need to ensure that it maintains the needed space, personnel, and vehicles to keep up with expected growth – if not, the Office would lose some of its current efficiency and effectiveness outcomes.

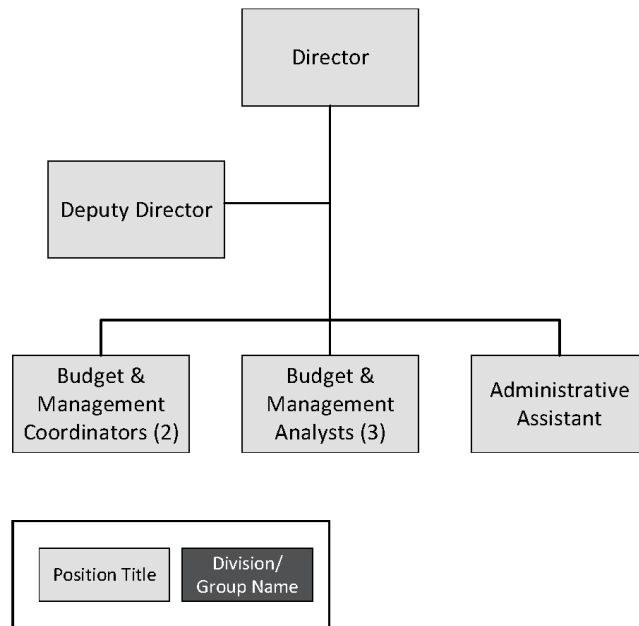
We are confident that with current Office efforts, as well as the recommendations contained in this report, that the Medical Examiner's Office will continue to support the deceased and their loved ones in times of crisis. We would like to thank Office leadership for their time and resources, and for allowing us to conduct interviews with 9 individuals across levels of the Department, perform job shadowing of certain functions, and tour facilities.

3.M Office of Management and Budget

Introduction

The Office of Management and Budget (“OMB”) is responsible for assisting the Office of the Chief Executive Officer (“CEO”) in developing and administering the County’s annual operating budget.

Organization



OMB is led by the Director, who reports directly to the Chief Operating Officer (“COO”). The Director is responsible for managing OMB’s staff and overseeing OMB’s operations, including representing OMB in budget development meetings with the CEO, COO, and Board of Commissioners (“BoC”), and final preparation of the budget proposal. The Deputy Director supports the Director by providing additional staff management, overseeing report preparation, and assisting the Director during budget development proceedings. Like most other OMB employees, the Director and Deputy Director are each also assigned to serve as the Department’s lead budget management representatives for a set of County departments.

OMB’s six staff-level positions all report to the Director. The Department’s two Budget & Management Coordinators serve as OMB’s lead budget management representative for assigned departments, including departments with relatively complex or demanding workloads, and oversee and coordinate the preparation of certain OMB reports.

The Department has a total of three Budget & Management Analyst and Senior Budget & Management Analyst positions, with position level varying based on the experience of the personnel filling the positions. The duties of the Budget & Management Analysts and Senior Budget & Management Analysts primarily consist of serving as lead budget management representative for their assigned departments and preparing OMB reports as needed. OMB also has one Administrative Assistant, who supports general Departmental operations, including processing OMB payroll. The Administrative Assistant also assists in processing invoices and payments related to County Commissioner discretionary funds and DCTV, the County's public, educational, and government access television channel.

Seven of OMB's eight budgeted positions are currently filled, with the only vacancy being in one of the Budget & Management Analyst/Senior Budget & Management Analyst positions, which OMB is currently recruiting to fill.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

Strategic Priorities

OMB was originally a division of the County's Finance Department but was split off in 2015 with the intention of allowing OMB to play a more strategic role in the budgeting process, similar to how budget agencies in state and federal government often act to directly support and advise the chief executive. While OMB does have some strategic aspects to its performance, it has not been regularly utilized to assist in the development and implementation of strategic budgeting methodologies, or otherwise ensuring that department budget submissions align with County strategic priorities. The County has utilized aspects of strategic budgeting methodologies, such as zero-based budgeting or performance-based budgeting, for highly limited areas of the budget, such as a small number of object lines in recent years, but has not comprehensively or holistically deployed these methodologies. The Department's budgeted staffing levels are sufficient given the Department's current workload and OMB is able to continue to function effectively despite the vacancy in the Budget & Management Analyst position, at least in the short-to-medium term. OMB's current resources do not allow the Department to both continue to complete its budget administration and development workload and also direct significant levels of resources towards engaging with strategic aspects of budgeting or serving as a proactive resource to County leadership.

OMB is currently only focused on operational budgeting using County funds and has limited involvement with budgeting for capital programs and grants-supported programs, although there are some areas (such as grants that involve the use of matching or other local funds) where there is not always a clear distinction drawn between the various budgeting processes. The County's capital programs and grants budgeting functions are currently performed by the Capital and Grants Division within the Finance Department. The division of the County's various budgeting functions between different departments can create confusion within many departments, who frequently reach out to OMB in an attempt to resolve issues or answer questions related to capital or grant budgets. The division of budgeting duties between departments may have also contributed to audit findings related to the County's failure to consistently adopt and operate under balanced budgets, as required by State law, for certain grants-related funds within the past several years.

The FY25 budget development process was OMB's first year utilizing two new software systems. The first is OpenGov, which the County uses as its budget management tool, which is replacing Oracle's Planning and Budgeting Cloud Service ("PBCS"). The second is Oracle's CloudVergent360 ("CV360"), the County's enterprise resource planning ("ERP") suite, which is replacing FMIS. Both software transitions have required OMB to significantly alter many key workflows. Due to the fact that both new software suites do not currently fully replicate the reporting functions of their predecessors, OMB staff have had to spend additional time preparing certain reports manually. OMB is currently working to develop additional necessary reporting functionality in both software platforms, working directly with the vendor in the case of OpenGov and working with the County Department of Innovation and Technology ("DOIT") in the case of CV360.

Key Duties and Responsibilities

OMB's key duties and responsibilities include overseeing the budget development process and performing within-year budget monitoring and management. The Administrative Assistant has several other responsibilities related to supporting general Departmental operations, including processing and submitting Departmental payroll and executing approved budget amendments in CV360 as directed by the Department's budget-focused staff. The Administrative Assistant is also responsible for processing invoices related to purchases made with County Commissioner discretionary funds as well as invoices for DCTV. The Administrative Assistant's role processing discretionary fund and DCTV invoices, which often include charges for various community events, community organizations or audiovisual equipment, does not align with OMB's primary function of preparing and managing the County's annual operational budget.

Budget Development Process

OMB's draft Budget & Management Analyst Handbook details the intended timeline for the budget development process, although the actual budget development process in a given year may run later than the intended timeline. One of the major risks for delaying OMB's intended budget timeline is the chance that the mid-year budget process runs late for some departments. OMB's intended timeline for developing the operational budget for a given year begins in August of the preceding year, when OMB leadership hold strategic budget planning sessions with County executives to determine budget priorities for the year. Around the same time OMB staff prepare revenue projections and base budgets for use throughout the budget process. In early September, the schedule proposed OMB staff helping their assigned departments to begin preparing budget requests by conducting training sessions for the departmental staff that will be involved in budget preparation on the budgeting process and use of budget development tools, such as OpenGov. Departmental budget requests are scheduled to be due to OMB in early October.

During October and November, OMB's schedule has staff auditing, reviewing, and analyzing budget requests from their assigned departments to prepare departmental budget recommendations, taking into account the budget priorities set by the CEO. Around this time, OMB staff also work with liaisons in their assigned departments to prepare writeups that document overall departmental accomplishments in the past year, including compiling metrics related to past goals and departmental performance, and goals, including setting performance targets, for the coming year. When departments include specific enhancements as part of their budget requests, such as new funding for particular departmental strategic initiatives, service offerings, or workflow improvements, OMB staff ask the department to provide a rationale behind the requested enhancement, including identifying the specific benefits that the enhancement aims to provide and listing metrics that can be tracked to evaluate the enhancement's success in achieving its intended goals.

OMB's intended timeline has the Department work with County executives, including the COO and CEO's office, to refine the budget request through November and early December until the CEO submits their budget recommendation to the BoC by the statutory deadline of December 15. The BoC reviews and considers the CEO's recommended budget through January and into February, with OMB revising the budget as indicated, before approving a budget prior to the statutory deadline of March 1. OMB then compiles and publishes the final budget book. During the time between the start of the fiscal year, January 1, and the budget's approval, County departments operate on a "placeholder" budget that is largely an extension of the past year's budget (excluding any one-time enhancements).

Following the conclusion of the budget development process, OMB conducts a "postmortem" evaluation to identify areas of success to build upon and challenge areas to address during the development of next year's budget.

The CEO's submission of their budget recommendation to the BoC is the first point that the BoC is statutorily involved in the budget development process. Members of the BoC often identify and develop their own budget priorities for the year, and this may result in a number of new requests for analysis by OMB staff as well as budget amendments for OMB review and incorporation. Additionally, introducing newly elected Commissioners, who take office near the end of the budget development timeline, to the budget process and the general budget framework can also take time. Including Commissioners and other stakeholders in earlier stages of the budget development process, either by requesting that the BoC pass an official budget priority resolution early in the budget development process, as the City of Atlanta does, or by inviting County Commissioners to participate in at least a portion of the strategic budget planning sessions where budget priorities are originally set, would allow OMB to operate more efficiently by allowing the Department to operate off of a single set of priorities throughout the budgeting process instead of having to modify their guiding priorities partway through the budget process when the BoC is first introduced to the process.

OMB conducts a midyear budget update process, similar to the standard budget development process, to update departmental budgets partway through the fiscal year, although it is making an effort to deemphasize the midyear budget update process for most County departments. Delays in the midyear budgeting process in some recent years (with final approval sometimes not occurring until into September or October) have caused the midyear adjustment process to impact the timeline of the standard budget development process. Additionally, the presence of an extensive midyear budget adjustment process may result in some departments exhibiting less financial discipline than they may display if they knew that they had fewer opportunities to request additional funding before the end of the fiscal year. A combination of these two concerns has resulted in OMB deemphasizing the midyear budget adjustment process for most departments, although the process is still referenced in various County and Departmental documents.

In addition to the primary budget development process, OMB plays a significant role in the development of the County's millage rate. OMB's role in the millage rate development process begins once the Property Appraisal & Assessment Department finalizes the County's tax digest, which typically occurs in May. Once OMB receives the tax digest, staff within the Department utilize Excel spreadsheets to calculate the millage rates for each of the County's six active property tax funds. Millage rates are developed in accordance with relevant State and County statutes and are contingent upon the total assessed value of properties for each taxed jurisdiction, as given in the tax digest, budgeted expenditures, and budgeted non-property tax revenues. The calculated millage rate is determined to be the millage rate needed to generate property tax necessary to meet budgeted expenditures after accounting for non-property tax revenues.

The Director and one of the Budget & Management Analysts perform two independent millage rate calculations, using separately developed Excel workbooks, and compare the results of each calculation in order to validate the produced rates. OMB determines whether the calculated rates fall within a desired range of rates, as determined by the CEO. If the calculated rates do not fall within the desired range, OMB works with the CEO's office to identify budget adjustments that can be made to bring millage rates within the desired range. Historically, budget adjustments made related to the development of County millage rates have been a major component of the midyear budget update. OMB presents the millage rates to BoC for approval consolidated into a single piece of legislation with any accompanying budget amendments.

Budget Monitoring and Management

The Director, Deputy Director, Budget & Management Coordinators, Senior Budget & Management Analysts, and Budget & Management Analyst are each assigned to serve as lead budget management representative for a set of County departments and funds. The Director and Deputy Director review and, as needed, adjust, each employee's budget management assignments whenever any staff leave or enter the Department to ensure that all Departments have staff assignments and to balance the workload between staff (accounting for other responsibilities that staff may have in addition to their departmental budget management responsibilities). The Director and Deputy Director incorporate staff skills and preferences into the process of making departmental budget management assignments, aiming to assign groups of related departments to the same employee and to assign larger and/or more complex departments to more experienced staff.

Serving as a department's assigned lead budget management representative entails leading OMB communications with the designated department as the department develops their budget request, performing the analyses necessary to support OMB's budget recommendation for the department, tracking the department's performance against their budget throughout the fiscal year, and managing within-year budget adjustment requests from the department.

In order to track department performance against budget, staff prepare monthly expenditure projections, typically by extrapolating linearly from the budgeted figures. OMB staff then review the projected figures daily against actual expenses, as given in fund available reports produced by CV360. Staff generally meet with the designated budget liaison within each of their assigned departments at least once per month to communicate the Department's overall performance against their budget but may communicate more often, particularly for more complex departments or in cases where a department's spending deviates significantly from OMB's monthly projections.

Departments submit budget amendment requests to OMB by completing a form (an Excel template) detailing the amendment request, including a justification for the request, and emailing the form to their designated budget management representative in OMB. The recipient in OMB reviews the request to determine if funds are available for the amendment and if the amendment is permissible. Departments are generally free to move available funds between most of their accounts, although there are restrictions on performing budget adjustments related to certain types of accounts, including personnel accounts, without CEO and/or BoC approval.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

OMB currently utilizes a handbook that was originally developed for the Department's predecessor organization within the Finance Department by a former Department employee in 2014. OMB has updated the 2014 handbook in a haphazard manner in the years since then, but portions are out of date and the document does not serve as a comprehensive review of all Department processes. OMB is in the process of developing a new Budget & Management Analyst's Handbook to replace the 2014 handbook, but this new document is not yet finalized, and significant portions have not yet been completed.

OMB is also in the process of developing an Operating and Capital Budget Policy, which will govern the development, administration, and operation of the County's capital and operating budgets, although this policy has not been completed or adopted and is still in a draft state.

OMB staff also utilize training materials and reference documents provided by the Department's software system vendors, including OpenGov and CV360. As part of the OpenGov implementation process, OMB staff have worked with the vendor to develop teaching and reference materials for end user staff throughout the County assigned to prepare their department's budget requests. OMB also created a brief guide for departmental staff on how to submit budget amendment requests.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

OMB does not currently perform any significant quantitative tracking of individual employee performance. OMB tracks several measures of overall Department performance, including evaluations in the Government Finance Officers Association (“GFOA”) Distinguished Performance Award process, satisfaction surveys for the recipients of Department-provided training at the start of the annual budgeting process, and various measures of budget performance (e.g., months of expenditures in reserve fund and variance between projected and actual revenues/expenditures). The Department began tracking all non-GFOA performance measures for the first time in FY24. OMB also is in the process of developing a customer satisfaction survey for the overall budgeting process, which will likely be administered to both department heads and departmental budget liaisons. OMB has begun setting annual targets related to the various performance measures that it has begun collecting, although data are not yet available for most measures to evaluate the Department’s performance against its targets.

OMB administers surveys to participants in budget training classes and its department customers in order to collect the data used to develop the satisfaction ratings for the budget training sessions and the overall budgeting process, respectively.

OMB also tracks a wide variety of performance metrics that it collects from County departments and agencies while developing and administering the County’s operational budget. OMB staff ask their assigned departments to identify specific performance measures for use in evaluating the department’s overall performance as well any performance aspects that can be more closely tied to the budgeting process, particularly budget enhancements. OMB staff often pay particular attention to performance metrics related to budget enhancements, as these data allow the analysts to evaluate whether the department’s historical enhancement requests have delivered their expected benefits, which helps the analysts infer how likely any future enhancements for the given department are to achieve their stated goals. OMB does not have standardized processes or systems in place for receiving and evaluating departmental performance data, at least in part due to the wide variance in methods that County departments use to track, store, and present their own performance data.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

OMB’s culture is generally perceived as professional, fostering healthy working relationships among the Department’s staff. Employee feedback indicates that morale is largely positive. Staff occasionally encounter frustrations with specific client departments, but these challenges are typically specific to the departments in question and are not indicative of larger issues in OMB’s overall process of working with County departments. The Director is open and accessible to staff and staff are comfortable approaching the Director with any questions or concerns directly. OMB’s internal communications are healthy and frequent. The Department holds a weekly team meeting, which serves as a valuable platform for staff to review past work and preview upcoming tasks.

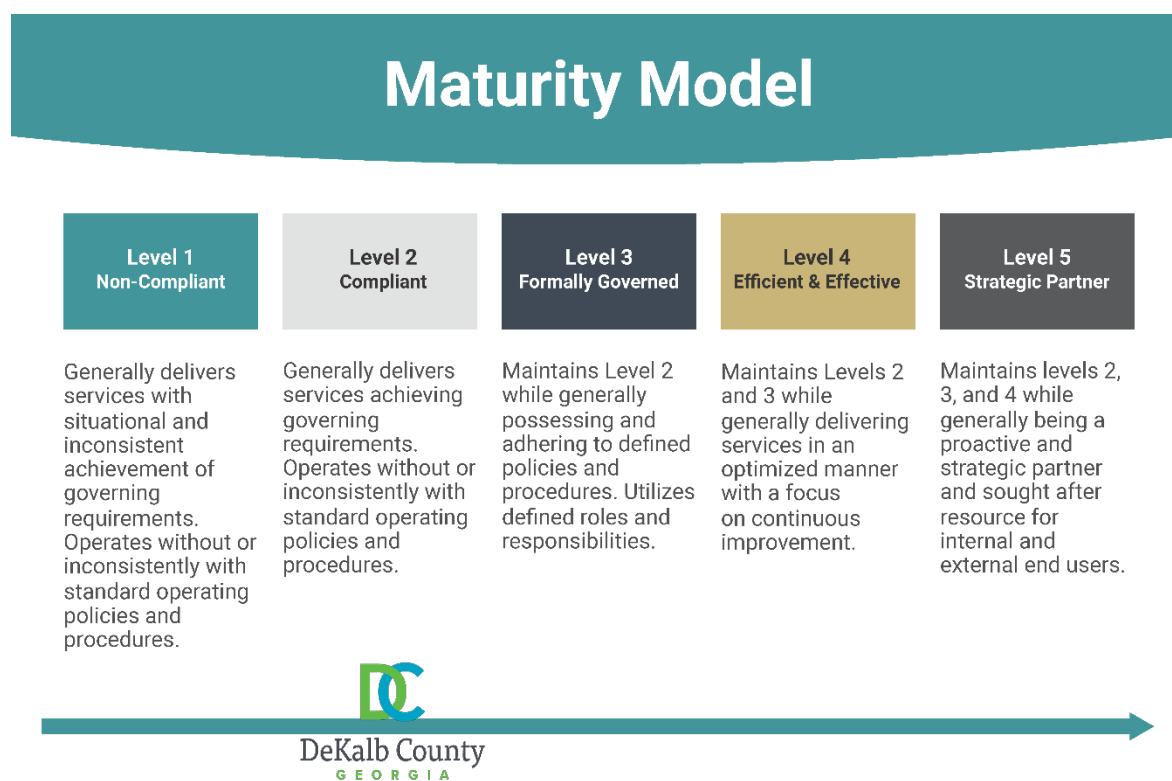
Staff did express a perceived lack of consistent and in-depth engagement in the budgeting process, which has impacted buy-in and belief that efforts will be appreciated. Factors contributing to this perception include reports of unclear direction regarding budgetary priorities and a lack of timely responsiveness to questions or decision points.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

The Department has received the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for FY21 through FY23, including receiving ratings of “proficient” or better for all categories for FY22.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 2: Compliant.

OMB generally fulfills its required budget development and administration goals but its processes are not consistently captured in complete, up-to-date documentation. The Department is in the process of preparing a set of comprehensive process documentation, which will likely be sufficient to advance OMB to Level 3: Formally Governed upon its completion and adoption. The current absence of updated and/or completed process documentation for many core OMB functions makes the Department reliant on its institutional knowledge and also creates challenges in providing consistent service across all customer departments.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1a: OMB is intended to serve as the analytical arm of the County's executive branch, assisting in the evaluation and development of County strategy and policy objectives. Instead, OMB currently functions primarily as an administrative agency, managing the day-to-day aspects of budget development and administration without taking on a larger strategic or analytic role. In particular, OMB has not introduced any modern, strategic budgeting methodologies, such as zero-based budgeting or performance-based budgeting, on a large scale. Also, none of the limited amount of strategic and/or analytical tasks routinely carried out by OMB extend beyond the realm of operational budget development and administration. County leadership does not currently treat OMB as if it is expected to serve an advanced, analytical role, nor does OMB provide the type of proactive analytical and strategic support that would be expected from an organization fulfilling OMB's stated purpose.

Observation 1b: OMB is responsible for developing and maintaining the County's operating budget, but the County's capital and grants budgets are primarily developed and maintained by the Capital and Grants Division within the Finance Department. OMB's role in the capital and grants budget development and administration process is not clearly defined, which occasionally leads to confusion, both with the Finance Department teams managing the capital and grants budgets and with OMB's client departments. In addition to decreasing the County's general operational effectiveness, the lack of clarity regarding OMB's role in the capital and grants budgeting processes may have helped contribute to audit findings related to the County's failure to consistently adopt and operate under balanced budgets, as required by State law, for certain grants-related funds within the past several years.

Recommendation 1: County leadership should review OMB's mission and placement within the County's organizational structure to determine whether OMB is currently the proper organization to serve as the primary office driving the County executive branch's analytical and strategic efforts. If the County's executive team determine that the executive's analytical and strategic efforts should remain housed within OMB, County leadership should conduct a thorough analysis to determine what additional resources (including personnel, software tools, and organizational support) OMB requires in order to fulfill the County's goals, set and enforce clear and measurable expectations for OMB performance going forward, and empower OMB with the independence, trust, and authority needed to cultivate the culture expected in a successful analytics and strategic planning agency. Additionally, the County should consider consolidating all County budget development and administration functions, including operating, capital, and grants budgeting, within OMB to improve coordination between the various budgeting functions and allow all three of them to more easily benefit from OMB's renewed strategic focus.

If the County's executive team determines that OMB should not function as its analytical and strategic service, County leadership should review OMB's placement on the County's organizational chart and consider making OMB a subsidiary unit of the Finance Department, to bring its organizational status in line with the County's parallel capital projects and grants budgeting functions as well as improve coordination between the various budgeting functions. County leadership should also clearly identify the organizational unit(s) that will provide strategic planning and analytics services for the executive branch.

Observation 2: The budget development process for the FY25 budget was OMB's first budget development process using the OpenGov and CV360 software platforms. In the process of transitioning from the County's old software systems to OpenGov and CV360, the Department lost the ability to automatically generate certain reports. The Department is currently working with the relevant software vendor and DOIT to develop additional reporting functions to address the functional gaps between the old systems and current systems.

Recommendation 2: OMB should continue working with the relevant software vendors and DOIT to develop additional reporting functions to replace those lost in the transitions to OpenGov and CV360. As part of developing these new reporting functions, OMB should ensure that the new reporting functions are thoroughly validated to ensure that the reports that they provide are accurate. Additionally, OMB should work with the relevant software vendors and DOIT to develop automated interfaces to transfer data between OpenGov and CV360, eliminating the need to manually export and import data whenever updates are needed.

Observation 3a: The CEO is required by statute to submit their operational budget proposal to the BoC by December 15 and the BoC is statutorily required to adopt a final operational budget by March 1, two months after the start of the County's fiscal year. In order to operate through the up-to-two months each year during which the County has not adopted an official budget, County departments utilize an "interim budget" that limits spending to the levels in the previous year's budget (excluding one-time enhancements). By operating under this interim budget for the first two months of the fiscal year, County departments are forced to delay the implementation of any new services or initiatives until well into the year and may have challenges providing certain services in the event that prices have increased materially since the time that the last budget was adopted.

Observation 3b: OMB's current operational budget development processes do not involve the County Commissioners in the budget process until the CEO's recommended budget is presented to the BoC on or before the statutory deadline of December 15. Delaying the introduction of County Commissioners into the budget development process until this late stage in the process typically results in OMB having to conduct significant budget reworks in response to Commissioner feedback that may have been avoided if OMB had a better understanding of BoC's interests during the evaluation of departmental budget requests or preparation of the CEO's recommended budget. Incorporating the BoC earlier in the budget development process would likely allow OMB to act on Commissioner priorities earlier, reducing the amount of reworking needed after the presentation of the CEO's recommended budget and potentially shortening the time needed between presentation of the CEO's recommended budget and final budget adoption.

Recommendation 3a: The County should work with OMB to review the County’s current budget development process and calendar to determine changes that could be made to reduce the time between the January 1 start of the County’s fiscal year and final BoC budget approval. Potential changes could include shifting the budget development process forward in time as well as reworking the staging of the budget development process to allow for a shorter BoC budget review period. When developing a new operational budget development timeline, the County and OMB should be mindful of the challenges brought about by the County’s fiscal year start date of January 1, especially those that arise when developing budgets for the years following election years, where the election and inauguration schedules create a risk that some budget development timelines require “lame duck” officials to propose and/or adopt the final operational budget. Potential methods of mitigating these concerns include adding specific provisions to a reworked County operational budget development policy that allows for the imposition of slight delays to the proposal and/or adoption deadlines in these or similar situations or, as in Gwinnett and Fulton Counties, scheduling final budget adoption deadlines shortly after the County’s inauguration date.

Recommendation 3b: The County should explore methods to involve County Commissioners in the operational budget development process at some point prior to the CEO’s formal presentation of their recommended budget. Potential methods of increasing County Commissioner involvement in the operational budget development process include requesting that the BoC pass an official budget priority resolution at some point early in the budget development process, as done by the City of Atlanta, or by inviting County Commissioners to participate in one or more of the strategic budget planning sessions held near the start of the budgeting process.

Observation 4: OMB’s current policy, process, and procedure documentation primarily consists of a comprehensive handbook that has not consistently been updated since it was first introduced in 2014. OMB is in the process of developing two new guiding documents, including a Budget & Management Analyst Handbook and an Operating and Capital Budget Policy, although these documents have not yet been completed and are currently in a draft stage.

Recommendation 4: OMB should prioritize finalizing the Budget & Management Analyst Handbook and Operating and Capital Budget Policy. Once these documents have been completed, reviewed, and approved, OMB should develop a process to ensure that OMB policy and reference documents are thoroughly reviewed and (if needed) updated on a regular basis. When developing policy and reference documents like the Budget & Management Analyst Handbook and the Operating and Capital Budget Policy, OMB should consider including fields in the document for use during the regular review process that record the initial effective date of the document, last revision date of the document, and last review date of the document.

Observation 5: OMB does not currently track or review any performance metrics related to individual employee performance. OMB recently started tracking several measures of overall department performance, including the results of the newly administered training satisfaction survey as well as certain measures of budget performance. OMB does not have a process in place for regularly reviewing these data and utilizing them to enhance departmental performance.

Recommendation 5: OMB should identify and develop methods for collecting and tracking additional performance measures, including new measures and targets related to individual performance (*e.g.*, budget amendment request turnaround time, with a target to complete X% of requests within a given timeframe) and new measures related to aspects of departmental performance not covered by the Department's existing measures (*e.g.*, total volume and/or value of budget amendment requests throughout the course of the fiscal year, and/or an overall departmental satisfaction survey covering the entirety of the budget development process). Additionally, OMB should develop processes for regularly reviewing the collected data to identify areas for potential improvement in the future and evaluate the impact of policy/process changes.

Conclusion

The Office of Management and Budget is operating fairly well as an operational agency, fulfilling its budget development and budget administration goals. If the County desires a more strategic budget function, the Department will need to enhance the operating model and resource support, as well as messaging from leadership, about this potential shift in model.

We would like to thank Department leadership for their time and resources, and for the opportunity to meet with all seven Department staff.

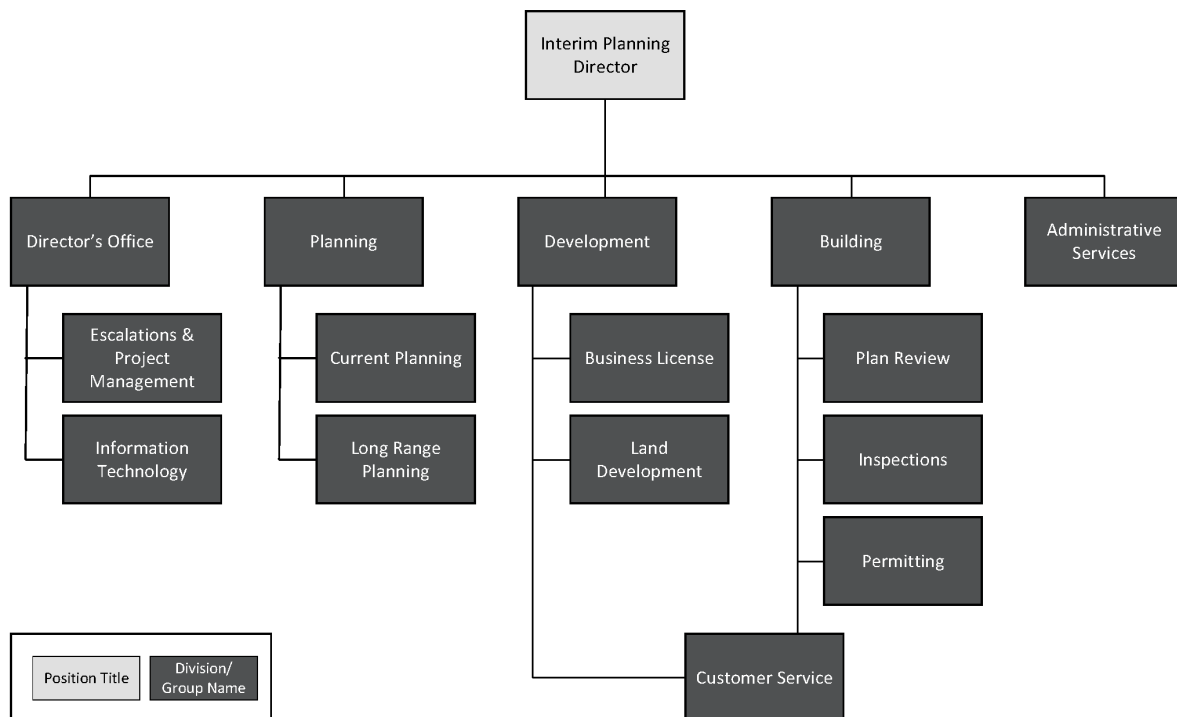
3.N Planning & Sustainability

Introduction

The DeKalb County Planning & Sustainability Department (“Department”) is responsible for long-term development and ensuring growth is environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable.

Organization

The Department is currently led by an Interim Planning Director. The Department consists of five primary divisions which report to the Interim Planning Director (“Director”). The following organizational chart depicts the Department’s divisions and functions housed within each division.



The following list defines the six divisions:

- Director's Office
 - Escalations & Project Management
 - Information Technology
- Planning
 - Current Planning
 - Long Range Planning
- Development
 - Business License
 - Land Development
- Building
 - Plan Review
 - Inspections
 - Permitting
- Customer Service
- Administrative Services

Director's Office

The Director's Office includes two primary Units – Escalations & Project Management and Information Technology.

Escalations & Project Management

The Escalations & Project Management Unit ("Unit") consists of a Special Projects Coordinator ("Coordinator"). The Unit is responsible for working with and receiving escalations from the County's Chief Executive Officer ("CEO"), Chief Operating Officer ("COO"), and other County departments related to planning and sustainability projects. The Coordinator is responsible for escalations when projects related to the Department encounter issues or delays. The Coordinator helps stakeholders resolve issues. The Coordinator also performs other duties as assigned such as providing information and data to stakeholders such as the CEO, COO, department directors, and constituents. The Coordinator also produces weekly reports of their workload and number of escalations to Department and County leadership.

Information Technology

The Information Technology Unit ("IT Unit") is led by a Planning IT Manager and includes Departmental Systems Administrator, Business Analyst, Departmental IT Specialist, and Administrative Specialist positions. The IT Unit is responsible for providing Department personnel with support for the Department's systems in addition to support for the external public as well. As such, the IT Unit receives requests for system enhancements or upgrades from Department personnel and makes upgrades to the system accordingly. The IT Unit also coordinates with the Department's system vendors as necessary. The IT Unit also serves as a liaison between the Department and the County's Department of Innovation and Technology.

Planning

The Planning Division (“Division”) is led by a Deputy Director and includes two Units of Current Planning and Long Range Planning.

Current Planning

The Current Planning Unit (“Unit”) is led by a Zoning Manager and Planning Administrator. Positions within the Unit include six Senior Planners, five Planners, three Administrative Specialists, and one Special Project Coordinator. The Unit is responsible for functions related to land use and zoning. For land use, the Zoning Board of Appeals meets monthly to receive and evaluate requests for variances from the zoning ordinance when it is alleged that the strict application of the zoning ordinance to a particular parcel of land will cause the owner an unnecessary hardship due to the size, shape, and topography of the parcel.

The Unit also reviews applications to rezone properties, often alongside changes to the land use plan which guides future growth. The Unit considers how changes will impact the community. Before finalizing any rezoning, necessary approvals must be secured to ensure developments align with the County’s vision.

Long Range Planning

The Long Range Planning Unit (“Unit”) is led by a Planning Manager. The Unit includes a Planning Administrator, Staff Engineer, Senior Planner, four Planners, a Geospatial Information Systems (“GIS”) Specialist, and an Administrative Specialist. The Unit also includes Sustainability Coordinator, Revitalization Coordinator, and Public Outreach Specialist positions. The Unit is responsible for forecasting future development plans for the County and managing growth in a manner that aligns with the County’s vision. The Unit writes policies for different elements of County planning and assists with the development of the County Comprehensive Plan which is updated every 5 to 10 years.

Development

The Development Division (“Division”) is led by a Deputy Director and includes Units of Business License and Land Development. The Deputy Director receives support from an Administrative Assistant, Management Analyst III, Management Analyst II, and a Special Projects Coordinator Senior position.

Business License

The Business License Unit (“Unit”) is led by a Business License Manager and includes two Senior Accounting Technicians and five Accounting Technicians. The Unit is responsible for issuing and renewing business and alcohol licenses for businesses within DeKalb County.

Land Development

The Land Development Unit (“Unit”) is led by a Land Development Manager. Positions within the Unit include four Senior Engineer Review Officers, three Engineer Review Officers, one Staff Engineer Senior, two Arborists, a Permit Technician, an Administrative Specialist, and a Special Project Coordinator. The Unit also includes an Environmental Inspection Supervisor who oversees seven Land Development Inspectors, one Development Construction Inspector Senior, and two Code Compliance Officer Seniors.

The Unit is responsible for completing pre-construction land development reviews and resolving any issues with customers if the Unit has comments on their plans. The Unit is also responsible for conducting environmental site inspections once plans are approved. The Unit has a team of inspectors which review the site pre-construction and during the construction process on a weekly basis to ensure that the site maintains compliance with applicable environmental standards.

Building

The Building Division (“Division”) is led by a Chief Building Official. The Division includes three Units – Plan Review, Inspections, and Permitting.

Plan Review

The Plan Review Unit (“Unit”) is led by a Plan Review Manager. The Unit includes four Building Plan Examiners, and an Administrative Specialist. The Unit is responsible for reviewing building plans prior to issuing a building permit within the Department’s plan review system, ProjectDox. It should be noted that the Unit is not currently reviewing residential building plans, but only commercial building plans.

Inspections

The Inspections Unit (“Unit”) is led by an Inspection Manager. The Unit includes an Inspection Supervisor, five Senior Building Inspectors, 10 Building Inspectors, two Office Assistants, and one Administrative Specialist. The Unit is responsible for inspecting residential and commercial buildings for compliance with County building code. The Unit inspects buildings for various trades such as electrical, plumbing, and main structure and includes final inspections which result in issuance of a certificate of occupancy. The Unit also investigate instances where building is taking place illegally to help ensure that all buildings receive the proper permits and are in compliance with the County building codes.

Permitting

The Permitting Unit (“Unit”) is led by a Permits Manager. The Unit includes a Permits Supervisor and seven Permit Technicians and an Administrative Specialist. The Unit is responsible for issuing building permits and assisting customers with the permitting process.

Customer Service

The Customer Service Division (“Division”) is housed within both the Development and Building Divisions, as the Division supports both. The Division includes a One Stop Shop operation which is a customer service center to help customers of the Department and additional related departments which are also part of the permitting workflow. The Division is led by a Customer Service Administrator. The Division includes two Senior Customer Care Representatives and four Office Assistants. The Division is responsible for assisting customers who are obtaining services from the Department. The Division can assist customers by checking permit statuses and providing them with information necessary to ensure they receive their permits.

Administrative Services

The Administrative Services Division (“Division”) is led by an Administrative Services Manager. The Division includes positions of a Payroll Personnel Lead, two Payroll Assistants, Records Coordinator, an Accountant, Accounting Technician, and an Administrative Specialist. The Division is responsible for supporting the Department with administrative functions and overseeing procurement contracts, supplies and inventory, and maintaining records. The Division processes open records requests and helps ensure payroll is processed timely and accurately. Related to open records requests, the Division processes a large volume of requests and locates all information requested manually – many documents are still in paper format and are not organized or housed in a central electronic repository. As such, the Division does not have a system which assists with locating documents. The Division also helps with recruitment efforts for the Department and ensures jobs are posted and funding is available for positions. The Division collaborates with County Finance and Human Resources & Merit System Departments.

Staffing Analysis

The Department experienced significant turnover within the past five years ranging from 16.3% to 25%. The table below depicts the turnover rate for each year in the reviewed period.

Year	Turnover Rate
2020	17.24%
2021	16.30%
2022	25.00%
2023	17.82%
2024	16.98%

Source: Department-provided staffing data

Of the employees who departed their position within the reviewed period, the average tenure in the Department was 1,695 days (4.64 years). Of the current employees as of March 2025, the average tenure in the Department is 1,865 days (5.11 years). The average headcount within the reviewed period is 96.33 employees. As of January 2025, the Department has 108 positions filled and 23 positions vacant.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

At the time of this report, the Department is working towards developing a comprehensive department-wide strategic plan that aligns with the County’s overall strategic goals. As gleaned from interviews with staff, the Department’s current key priorities are:

- Customer Service
- Compliance
- Public Outreach
- Staffing
- Conducting a Fee Study Update

Customer Service

A key priority of the Department is to provide excellent customer service to the public related to planning and development services. A critical component of the Department's customer service is its Call Center and One Stop Shop, which provide services to the public over the phone and within the Department's lobby. The Call Center answers about 500 to 600 calls and 200 to 300 emails per week from the public. As such, the Call Center and One Stop Shop help answer customer questions related to Department services such as permit and inspection statuses and help to serve as a liaison between the public and Department personnel.

Additionally aiding customer service efforts is the ability for customers to complete applications for business licenses and permits, and schedule inspections online through the Department's e-permitting and plan review systems. Infor Public Sector ("IPS", "Hanson", or "e-permitting") serves as the Department's e-permitting system and ProjectDox serves as the Department's plan review system. Before the systems' implementation in 2020, customers had to apply for permits and bring plans to the Department in physical copies. The implementation of the Department's systems has created multiple efficiencies for the Department and its customer service, and has shortened the amount of time needed to complete plan reviews and issue permits. Customers must create an account within IPS to apply for permits, and must also create an account within ProjectDox to upload plans and receive feedback on plans from Department staff. The IT Unit has goals to create training videos for the public to help better navigate the use of the Department's systems.

During fieldwork, staff expressed concerns with the systems not communicating and poorly integrated workflows and therefore not being as efficient as possible for the Department and the public. Staff noted that the systems are not very user-friendly and can confuse customers due to the need to create accounts within each system and the inability to apply for permits and upload plans in the same system.

Also, staff expressed frustration related to reporting capabilities in the systems being very limited and difficult to extract information related to performance and workload data. Furthermore, staff expressed concerns over not being able to conduct plan reviews for residential properties due to the system not being configured for residential plan reviews. As such, the Department is performing inspections on residential properties without previously performing plan reviews. Therefore, without residential plan reviews, field inspectors are responsible for identifying issues of noncompliance with governing requirements such as building codes and zoning laws.

In efforts to improve customer service and Departmental efficiency, the Department is in the process of evaluating a system replacement to replace IPS. The goal of exploring new systems is to find a solution that better integrates/communicates with ProjectDox so that customers can create one account to apply for permits and upload plans for review and can have better visibility into the workflow.

Furthermore, the Department is currently in the process of documenting service-level agreements to ensure that reviews are conducted in a timely manner and customer service provided is efficient. The current workflow includes application intake and initial approval, then multiple divisions receive the plans to review simultaneously – each review can result in passing, failing, or suggesting revisions on the plans. Customers must wait for all divisions to complete the review prior to making any corrections or resubmitting plans. Then, if revisions are needed, the customer resubmits plans to all of the divisions at once for a subsequent review. The permit then has to be approved and issued manually within the systems once the appropriate divisions have approved the plans. As such, the current permitting process is decentralized as different divisions receive plans for review at the same time. During interviews, staff shared desires to change the process to flow to each division as individual steps within the permitting process, starting with planning and zoning to ensure plans receive approval from planning and zoning prior to moving on to additional divisions for review. A more process-based approval approach would allow the Department and customers the ability to better manage each step in the workflow, understand exactly where revisions may be needed, and would reduce multiple reviews/approvals needed by County stakeholders involved in the approval process.

The Department's service-level agreements are depicted in the following list:

- Application Intake: Process completed within two (2) business days
- Initial Approval: Verified for completeness within (1) business day
- Division Reviews: Completed within five (5) business days
- Final Approval and Stamping: Completed within two (2) business days post-review
- Notification to Applicants: Automated notifications sent immediately after each key process stage

The Department also follows service-level agreements codified in the state law which codifies a 30-day period from permit intake to final review. Based on conversations with staff, staff noted common delays within the permitting process relate to external County departments that are included in the permitting process (e.g. Department of Watershed Management and Fire Rescue). Staff noted communication issues and physical distance between the Department's offices and external department offices as contributing factors. Based on interviews, the Department's reputation and perception within the building community has not been as positive as staff would have hoped – primarily due to delays in permitting process and communication issues.

Compliance

An additional goal of the Department is to ensure compliance with County ordinances. An area in which Department staff does not feel the Department is being proactive to identify cases of noncompliance within the Business License Unit ("Unit"). Due to current level of allocated positions, the Unit does not include an enforcement team dedicated to performing inspections on businesses to ensure they are operating with an active business license. As such, the Unit coordinates with the County Code Compliance Department to conduct enforcement inspections. Therefore, the Unit is not being as proactive as possible to identify businesses that are operating without a business license and the County could be missing out on potential additional revenues. M&J learned in interviews that the Department's most recent budget request included a request for one or two inspector positions to develop an enforcement function within the Unit.

Furthermore, the Department does not have zoning inspectors to go into the field and ensure that what is approved on paper within plans is translated to the finished product. In the Department's most recent budget proposal, the Department requested additional funding for zoning inspector positions which are not uncommon positions in the industry.

Public Outreach

Goals related to planning and zoning for the County include increasing the number of small-area plans completed within the County and participating in additional community outreach. The Planning Division has conducted "Community 101" planning academy meetings which include staff going into communities and neighborhoods that have substantial development occurring or the potential for substantial development to teach the public how to advocate for their communities and provides information on how to better change communities through the Department's planning and zoning processes. The Long Range Planning Unit then provides recommendations based on feedback received from the community and are tasked with connecting residents with Departments within the County that can help address their concerns or issues. The Planning Division also conducts "Planning & Zoning 102: The New DeKalb Way" training sessions to introduce the public to the legal bodies within the County such as the Community Council Board, Planning Commission, and Board of Appeals and to familiarize the public with County planning processes. The goal of the community outreach sessions and seminars are to educate the public and improve the public's perception and opinion of the Department.

Staffing Analysis

The Department has suffered from high turnover rates within the past five years ranging from 16.3% - 25%. The Department continues to experience vacancies and staff appear to be at capacity in the Development, Planning, and Building Divisions. Staff expressed concerns specifically related to Permit Technicians which appear to be a mostly administrative job but require technical training and knowledge related to the permitting and plan review processes and systems. As such, the Department created a Permit Technician Training Manual in September 2024 to ensure that Permit Technicians receive consistent training on processes and procedures.

The Office Assistant and Administrative Specialist positions located within the Planning and Building Divisions perform duties similar to those of a Permit Technician, but do not have the Permit Technician title or salary. Staff expressed concerns related to office space to house specifically the Planning Division and the Call Center. Multiple physical offices are shared between two people, which can negatively affect employee morale.

Staff expressed concerns related to lack of consistent training and certifications from organizations such as the International Code Council or the International Association of Certified Home Inspectors, allotted to employees specifically within the Building Division. As such, not all inspectors and supervisors maintain certifications. The Department is in the process of awaiting approval for implementing a formal certification program.

Conducting a Fee Study Update

The Department has not conducted a fee study to identify the full cost of service provision related to multiple fees charged to the public since 2015. The Department included a request for funding to conduct a fee study in its most recent budget proposal.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

The Department maintains different types of documentation for documenting policies and procedures.

Manuals

The Department maintains three types of manual documents. The Department maintains a Technology Specialist/Administrative Specialist Manual (“TS/AS manual”) with a purpose of acclimating a new employee to the role of a Technology Specialist/Administrative Specialist. The TS/AS manual was last revised in October 2024 and includes information and instructions related to systems used by the Department in addition to portals and additional technological tools that Technology Specialists/Administrative Specialists may use on the job.

The Department also maintains a Permit Technician Training Manual (“Training Manual”) which includes various topics related to Permit Technician duties such as creating dashboards, voiding permits, permit workflows, and permit applications and forms. The Training Manual is structured to provide clear and concise technical information on permit types, application procedures, and requirements for each type of permit. As such, the Training Manual is designed to provide training and answer commonly asked questions that new Permit Technicians may have. The Training Manual was created in September 2024.

The Department also maintains a Team Member’s Handbook (“Handbook”) which includes policies related to the County and Department which apply to all Department employees. Sections of the Handbook include workplace standards, campus policies, and departmental policies. Each team member is required to sign and print their name and date to acknowledge policies contained in the Handbook. The Handbook does not include a date of creation or updating but appears to be up to date with accurate information such as the Department’s most recent organizational chart. There is also not a formal process for disseminating updates to the Handbook and obtaining additional signatures after updates have been included.

Standard Operating Procedures

The Department maintains a variety of standard operating procedures (“SOPs”) for each of the Department’s divisions. The Department maintains SOPs and workflows on the following topics:

- Director’s Office
 - Communications
 - Service-level Agreements for each division
 - Code of Conduct
- Planning
 - Planning Division SOPs
 - Zoning Permit
 - Internal Resource Guide for Long-Range Planning

- Information Technology
 - User Access and Super User Roles
 - Periodic Review of Assigned Roles to User Accounts
 - Identification and Management of Dormant Accounts
- Building
 - Permit Life Cycle
 - Permit Payment Solution Workflow
 - Building Construction Permit Life Cycle
 - Environmental Inspection Process
 - Temporary Power Pole Inspection Process
 - General Combined Plumbing
 - Fire Sprinkler System
 - Electrical Inspection
 - Electrical Fire Alarm
 - Electrical Combined Line
 - City Services Permits
- Development
 - Development Division SOPs
 - Land Development Process Workflow
 - Development Services Workflow
 - Occupancy Processing
 - General Combined Plumbing

The Department underwent a Current State Process Assessment in December 2024 from Human Capital Consultants Consortium, LLC. A recommendation of the Current State Process Assessment was for the Department to update existing SOPs and create additional SOPs. As such, the Director mandated divisions to begin updating and creating SOPs. The Department's existing SOPs reviewed by M&J have been updated/created within 2024 and 2025. At the time of this report, the Department is still in the process of updating existing SOPs and developing additional SOPs.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department reports a variety of metrics related to each division's output and workload to the Director and Chief Operating Officer's Office. The following list identifies examples of the types of data points reported on a routine basis:

- Planning
 - Completed reviews
 - Pending reviews
 - Review cycles (1st reviews, 2nd reviews, 3rd reviews, 4+ reviews)
 - Staff hours for preparing and attending for Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners meetings
 - Pre-application meeting types
 - Long-range planning major projects
 - Board of Commissioners meetings and hearings
 - Zoning Board of Appeals meetings

- Historic Preservation Commission meetings
- Sketch Plat meetings
- Building
 - Plan/Project reviews
 - Processed permits
 - Applications processed
 - Turn-around time for commercial reviews
 - Trade inspections
- One Stop Shop
 - Average wait time
 - Average service time
 - Service-level agreement score
 - Average visitors by day of the week
 - Online customer care measured by contacts and issue resolution
 - Total calls
- Development
 - Business License applications submitted and processed
 - Business License revenues
 - Business License phone calls
 - Development revenues
 - Land development review types completed
 - Completed reviews
 - Pending reviews

The Department collects and reports information related to Department staffing and vacancies. The Department collects scheduling data through administering Current Work Schedule & Non-Frontline Employee Work Schedule Surveys which include questions to managers and supervisors regarding days of the week in the office, days worked in the pay period, work schedules used in their division, and whether there is daily onsite manager or supervisor coverage.

M&J received a Planning Division end-of-the-year 2024 report which shows various data and metrics for the Planning Division. The following graph shows the number of reviews completed by the Planning Division in 2024:



In total, the Planning Division completed 6,294 reviews in 2024.

The Human Capital Consultants Consortium, LLC Assessment resulted in recommendations for the Department to implement between 0-12 months after the Assessment. As such, the Department is currently in the process of implementing recommendations categorized into addressing within the first 0-4 months after the Assessment. The Department maintains an Action Register document that tracks progress towards implementation of tasks or recommendations to address in addition to the timelines and deadlines for each.

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

Based on industry leading practices, additional performance measures/data points the Department should consider tracking include the number of re-inspections performed by builder (which will help the Department understand causes for not passing inspections the first time, and can better educate the building community to make any needed changes in the future), as well as tracking specific development activities to the County's Long Range Plan to better understand if County economic growth efforts and resources are having a direct impact.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

Based on numerous interviews, the culture within the Department is positive. Staff feel that they have the support of management and leadership within the Department. Staff noted satisfaction and appreciation for quarterly outings and celebrations to celebrate milestones that Department staff have for team-building purposes. Department employees also noted good internal Department communication with regularly scheduled team meetings and other less formal methods of understanding Department leadership's messaging. Any policy changes are communicated through policy memos from the Director.

There are select interim and vacant leadership positions within the Department with interim positions being currently filled by existing Department employees with other regularly assigned roles. Leadership who are in interim positions have an increased workload as they are responsible for divisions with vacant managerial positions in addition to their own assigned division.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

In 2020, the Department implemented IPS and ProjectDox to allow the application, plan review, and permitting process to be electronic so that a customer can complete required steps online. The implementation of the e-permitting and plan review systems has created efficiencies for the Department and its customers as plans can be submitted online and the process has shifted from manual and paper-based to an automated workflow. The current systems have resulted in reduced office visits and foot traffic in the Department's lobby. However, the current system environment is not optimized as multiple systems and logins are required by customers and there is not real-time visibility from the customer's perspective as to project status. To help build on efficiencies gained by implementing the systems, the Department is in the process of searching for a replacement/upgrade of IPS with the goals of allowing more integration to ProjectDox and enhance customer visibility to project status in real time.

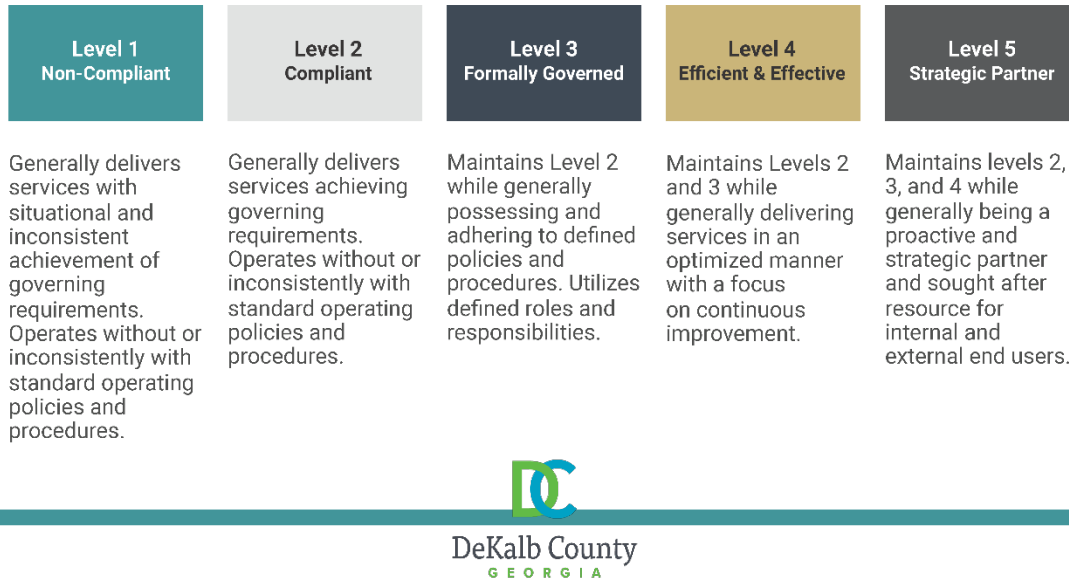
The Department maintains a One Stop Shop within the Department's office lobby which allows customers to visit in-person and speak to representatives for permit services, land development, watershed, transportation, and business license among other functions in an effort to centralize and streamline customer service.

The Department's IT Unit created a knowledge base for the public to show process flows for each permit and license dependent upon the location's address. The tool shows the permits and approvals the public would need to obtain based upon the project. Furthermore, at the time of this report, the IT Unit is in the process of creating a knowledge base of common customer issues based on what issues the Call Center addresses through each of its calls. The creation of the knowledge base will allow the Department to better anticipate common questions asked by users to target additional resources and training tools to market to the public to reduce needs for customer assistance.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.

Maturity Model



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 3: Formally Governed. The Department maintains service-level agreements and is in the process of documenting formal procedures and SOPs. The Department includes areas for improvement within its customer service functions, systems used, strategic planning, and staffing related to retention and filling of vacant managerial positions.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: The Department processes a large volume of open records requests through its Administrative Division. Staff within the Administrative Division have to locate files manually.

Recommendation 1: The Department should consider switching to a system that will allow for greater automation of open records requests to help reduce manual efforts required to locate information. The Department should work to digitize all its paper documents and create a centralized system storage to reduce time locating documents from multiple locations. The County leverages GovQA in other departments and possibly could be utilized in the Planning and Sustainability Department to help facilitate open records request.

Observation 2: At the time of this report, the Department is working towards developing a comprehensive Department-wide strategic plan that aligns with the County's overall strategic goals.

Recommendation 2: The Department should continue its efforts to create a strategic plan that aligns with the County's overall strategic goals.

Observation 3: During fieldwork, staff expressed concerns with the systems not communicating and not being as efficient as possible for the Department and the public. Staff noted that the systems are not very user-friendly to the public and can confuse customers due to the need to create accounts within multiple systems (IPS and ProjectDox). Also, staff expressed frustration related to reporting capabilities in the systems being very limited and difficult to extract information related to performance and workload data.

Recommendation 3: The Department should continue its efforts to find a software solution that can allow customers to have one self-service portal in which they can make payments, upload plans, and have visibility to where in the process their submittal stands. The software solution should also integrate or communicate with ProjectDox and be able to produce the desired departmental reports. The Department should collaborate with the Department of Innovation and Technology to ensure that the procurement of any new system meets County IT goals and objectives.

Observation 4: The Department does not perform residential plan reviews and the current IPS system configuration was cited as the primary reason for not performing residential plan reviews. As such, the Department is performing inspections on residential properties after or during construction without performing plan reviews early in the process. Therefore, without residential plan reviews, inspectors are responsible for identifying issues of noncompliance with governing requirements such as building codes and zoning laws.

Recommendation 4: The Department should configure its current plan review system to support residential plan reviews or should consider implementing a solution which can support residential plan reviews in addition to the Department's current requirements. The Department should also consider allocating additional positions within the Building Division to support residential plan reviews.

Observation 5: The current process for obtaining a building permit includes application intake and initial approval, then divisions such as planning, development and building all receive plans to review at the same time and then are left to pass, fail, or suggest revisions on the plans. Customers must wait for plans to complete the review among different divisions prior to making any corrections or resubmitting plans. Then, if revisions are needed, the customer resubmits plans to all of the divisions at once for a subsequent review. The permit then has to be approved and issued manually within the systems once the appropriate divisions have approved the plans. As such, the current permitting process is decentralized as different divisions receive plans for review at the same time.

Recommendation 5: As the Department implements a new system, the Department should consider assessing and restructuring the workflow to obtain a building permit to start with the Planning Division and flow through remaining divisions as separate steps within the workflow so that any revisions can be communicated to the customer before the permit has completed the review cycle.

Observation 6: Based on interviews, common delays within the permitting process relate to external County departments that are included in the permitting process (e.g. Department of Watershed Management and Fire Rescue).

Recommendation 6: The Department should consider establishing internal service-level agreements related to external departments which are included in the permitting process.

Observation 7: The Business License Unit does not currently possess any positions for an enforcement team dedicated to performing proactive inspections on businesses to ensure they are operating with an active business license.

Recommendation 7: The Department should assess staffing levels within the Business License Unit and consider allocating additional inspectors to assist with ensuring businesses are operating with active business licenses. The proactive inspection function would help to generate additional revenues that may currently go undetected.

Observation 8: The Department does not have zoning inspector positions that go into the field and to ensure that the initially approved plans align to the pre-construction work performed.

Recommendation 8: The Department should consider allocating additional positions to the Planning Division with the duties of zoning inspectors to allow the Department to be more proactive in ensuring that approved plans are in compliance with zoning standards and guidelines during construction.

Observation 9: Office Assistant and Administrative Specialist positions located within the Planning and Building Divisions appear to perform duties similar to those of a Permit Technician, but do not have the Permit Technician title or salary.

Recommendation 9: The County should assess the position titles of Office Assistants and Administrative Specialists within the Department and consider changing titles and pay grades to match those of Permit Technicians if warranted.

Observation 10: Specifically, within the Planning Division and the Call Center, there are multiple offices that are shared between two people, which can negatively affect employee morale.

Recommendation 10: The Department should identify alternative office space to house Planning Division and Call Center employees and to eliminate shared office spaces as possible.

Observation 11: Staff expressed concerns related to lack of consistent training and certifications from organizations such as the International Code Council or the International Association of Certified Home Inspectors, allotted to employees specifically within the Building Division. As such, not all inspectors and supervisors maintain certifications. The Department is in the process of awaiting approval for implementing a formal certification program.

Recommendation 11: The Department should continue its efforts to implement a certification program and establish programs to ensure Building Division employees maintain certifications that assist with job duties.

Observation 12: The Department has not conducted a fee study to identify the full cost of service provision related to multiple fees charged to the public since 2015. The Department included a request for funding to conduct a fee study in its most recent budget proposal.

Recommendation 12: The Department should continue its efforts to commission a fee study and update the County's fee schedule for the Department's services. The fee study should include all County departments and personnel involved in any Planning and Sustainability processes for which fees are charged to the public to ensure that the total cost (direct and indirect costs) are included in the fees.

Observation 13: The Department underwent a Current State Process Assessment in December 2024 from Human Capital Consultants Consortium, LLC. A recommendation of the Current State Process Assessment was for the Department to update existing SOPs and create additional SOPs. As such, the Director mandated divisions to begin updating and creating SOPs. At the time of this report, the Department is still in the process of updating existing SOPs and developing additional SOPs.

Recommendation 13: The Department should continue its efforts to create and update existing SOPs to document processes and to ensure SOPs are in alignment with departmental practices.

Observation 14: The Department experienced turnover rates ranging from 16.3% to 25% from the past five years.

Recommendation 14: The Department should consider and implement strategies and programs including incentives to reduce high turnover and increase retention throughout the Department.

Observation 15: There are select interim and vacant leadership positions within the Department with interim positions being currently filled by existing Department employees with other regularly assigned roles. Leadership who are in interim positions have an increased workload as they are responsible for divisions with vacant managerial positions in addition to their own assigned division.

Recommendation 15: The Department should continue its efforts to fill vacant and interim leadership positions with permanent staff members to help reduce burden and workload on managerial staff who are assuming responsibility for additional divisions or units.

Conclusion

The Planning and Sustainability Department is an integral component to achieving positive economic growth in the County. The Department's current efforts to develop a formal Department Strategic Plan and enhancement of its core customer-facing and internal systems will help ensure better customer experiences as well as more efficient processing times.

The Department should continue to assess internal workflow and positions to ensure that processes are optimized, and revenues are appropriately captured. The Department's One-Stop-Shop proves to be an effective method of assisting the building and residential communities with their various needs and is considered a leading practice.

We are confident that with current Department efforts, as well as the recommendations contained in this report, that the Planning and Sustainability Department will continue to help foster positive economic growth in the County. We would like to thank Department leadership for their time and resources, and for allowing us to conduct interviews with 12 individuals across levels of the Department, perform job shadowing of certain functions, and tour facilities.

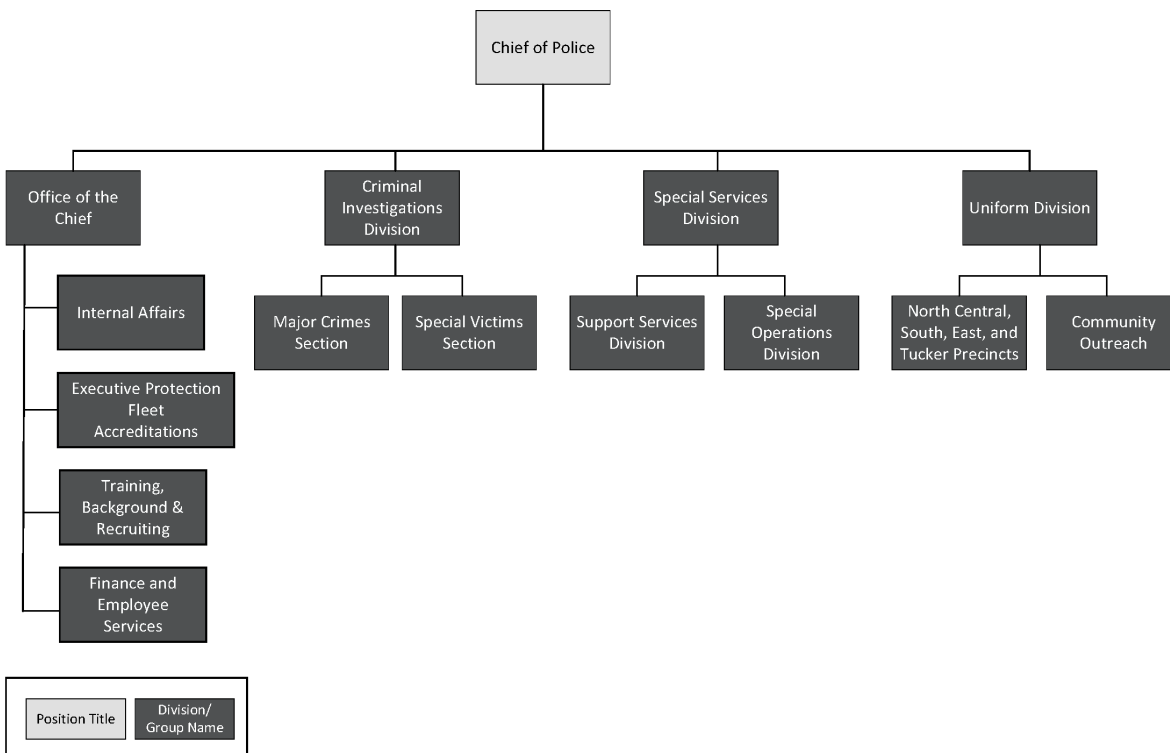
3.O Police Department

Introduction

The DeKalb County Police Department (“Department”) services over 700,000 citizens within 271 square mile radius by protecting the peaceful against the lawless, ensuring justice, and safeguarding lives and property, while serving with a commitment to the constitutional rights afforded to all people.

Organization

The Department is currently led by an Interim Chief of Police appointed on February 20, 2025, who has significant experience rising through the ranks of the Department. The Department includes 850 allocated sworn positions and 169 allocated civilian positions. The Department has 10 primary functions. Four functions are housed within the Office of the Chief and six functions are organized into three Divisions: Criminal Investigations, Special Services, and Uniform. Each Division is led by an Assistant Chief with remaining functions led by a Captain, the Chief of Staff, a Major, and a Fiscal Officer and Personnel Supervisor. The following organizational chart depicts the structure of the Department and its functions.



The 10 primary functions are as follows:

- Office of the Chief
 - Internal Affairs
 - Executive Protection, Fleet, and Accreditations
 - Training, Background, & Recruiting
 - Finance and Employee Services
- Criminal Investigations Division
 - Major Crimes Section
 - Special Victims Section
- Special Services Division
 - Support Services Division
 - Special Operations Division
- Uniform Division
 - North Central, South, East, and Tucker Precincts
 - Community Outreach

The organization chart is designed generally adequate for police operations, however, the Special Services Division consists of two very different primary functions – support services and special operations, all under a single position. This current organizational alignment and our recommendation are further discussed in this report.

Office of the Chief

The Office of the Chief is led by the Chief of Police (“Chief”). The Office of the Chief includes an Aide to the Chief position which is responsible for administrative duties related to maintaining the Chief’s calendar, reviewing and issuing policies from the Chief’s direction, providing customer service for any public complaints directed to the Chief, and serving as a liaison between the Assistant Chiefs and the Chief. Also, the Aide to the Chief is responsible for any special projects or duties as assigned by the Chief such as providing executive protection to the Chief and accompanying the Chief to meetings and events as needed for protection and to assist with administrative duties.

The Office of the Chief also includes an Administrative Assistant position responsible for maintaining Department personnel rosters, preparing and tracking approved disciplinary actions, maintaining home and emergency telephone records for all Department employees and performing any special duties assigned by the Chief.

The Office of the Chief also includes a Chief of Staff position which reports directly to the Chief and is responsible for oversight of the Executive Protection, Fleet, and Accreditations functions within the Department. As such, the Chief of Staff supervises 10 positions across the Executive Protection, Fleet, and Accreditations units.

There are a total of four units that report to the Chief. Units which report to the Chief include:

- Internal Affairs
- Executive Protection, Fleet, and Accreditations
- Training, Background, & Recruiting
- Finance and Employee Services

Internal Affairs

The Internal Affairs Unit (“Unit”) is responsible for receiving and investigating complaints received internally and externally, promoting discipline and good order, and maintaining records of complaints and investigations. The Unit also facilitates random drug testing for the Department. The Unit is led by a Captain and includes one Lieutenant, three Investigative Sergeants, two Investigative Aides, and one Licensed Professional Counselor available to provide support to employees.

Executive Protection, Fleet, and Accreditations

The Executive Protection, Fleet, and Accreditations Unit (“Unit”) is led by the Chief of Staff. The Executive Protection function is responsible for providing protection and details for the Chief Executive Officer of the County in addition to the Chief upon request. Executive Protection staff include one Sergeant and two Master Police Officers. If necessary, the Unit may request additional Officers from the East Precinct to assist if additional protection is needed.

The Fleet function is responsible for maintaining and assigning fleet vehicles to employees that need vehicles within the Department. The function works closely with the Fleet Management Division with the County’s Public Works Department to ensure vehicle maintenance is performed and to ensure vehicles are being replaced appropriately. The Fleet function includes one Sergeant, one Master Police Officer, and three civilian Public Safety Support Aides.

The Accreditation function is responsible for maintaining Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (“CALEA”) and Georgia Police Accreditation Coalition (“GPAC”) certifications and ensuring all deadlines are met for reporting to obtain such accreditations. The function includes one civilian Manager and one Master Police Officer position.

Training, Background, & Recruiting

The Training, Background, & Recruiting Unit (“Unit”) is responsible for delivering and coordinating training activities, recruitment for the whole Department as well as screening and reviewing the backgrounds for applicants to the Department. The Unit is led by a Major. The Major oversees two Lieutenants, four Sergeants, 13 Master Police Officers, two civilian Administrative Specialists, one civilian Instructor, and three Senior Investigative Aides.

Recruit and Officer training is held at the DeKalb County Police Academy and the Firing Range owned by the County. The Training Section is responsible for developing and implementing successful basic police recruit training programs, advanced, specialized and in-service training programs, civilian training programs, and a career development program. As such, the Unit guides new Officers through the Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training (“POST”) certification and conducts the Police Officer Academies. All sworn personnel, lieutenants and below, are required to qualify semi-annually on the current Firearms Stress Course and receive a passing score to maintain certification.

The Background Unit is responsible for conducting background investigations during the selection process for employment with the Department. Background investigations are conducted on each applicant that successfully completes basic entry-level requirements which may include a written examination and physical agility test.

The Recruiting Unit is responsible for developing an effective program for the recruitment of qualified personnel for sworn and civilian positions with the Department. As such, the Unit is responsible for leveraging tools such as contact with community organizations, advertisements and media campaigns, participation in local and regional job fairs, and recruiting at surrounding high schools, universities, and community colleges to help recruit qualified candidates.

Finance and Employee Services

The Finance and Employee Services Unit (“Unit”) is responsible coordinating the Department’s daily human resources and financial services such as payroll, time reporting, annual budget preparation and fiscal oversight. The Unit includes three subunits of Finance, Personnel, and Grants.

The Finance Unit is led by a Fiscal Officer who oversees two Fiscal Assistants. The Finance Unit is responsible for annual budget preparation and fiscal oversight. The Finance Unit ensures that the Department stays aligned with approved annual budgets.

The Personnel Unit is led by a Personnel Supervisor who oversees five Payroll/Personnel Assistants. The Personnel Unit is responsible for human resources functions such as timesheet and payroll management, personnel actions such as new hires and terminations, and serve as the first point of contact when Department employees have questions about benefits or payroll. The Personnel Unit ensures that timesheets are reported accurately and ensure payroll is submitted on-time and accurately to the County Human Resources Department.

The Grants Unit is led by a Grants Coordinator position which is the only position assigned to Grants. The Grants Unit manages grant funds including federal grants and contracts while ensuring the Department complies with grant regulations, timelines, and reporting requirements.

Criminal Investigations Division

The Criminal Investigations Division (“Division”) is led by an Assistant Chief and is supported by a Major and two Captains who oversee the Major Crimes and Special Victims Sections. The Division is responsible for investigating and following up on violent crimes against persons, gang activity, quality of life issues and illegal drug violations. The Division consists of the Major Crimes and Special Victims Sections.

Major Crimes Section

The Major Crimes Section (“Section”) consists of six units and is supervised by a Captain with assistance from an Investigative Aide. Each subsection is supervised by Sergeants. The following are the six units within Major Crimes:

- Homicide/Assault
- Gangs
- Robbery
- Neighborhood Enforcement Team
- Traffic Specialist Unit
- Crime Scene

The responsibilities of the Captains are to coordinate and control the operations within the Section. Captains also oversee Sergeants over each unit or squad within the Section. Each unit is responsible for investigating the specific type of crime assigned to the unit. The Section includes approximately 115 positions including sworn and non-sworn (civilian) positions.

The Homicide/Assault Unit is led by a Lieutenant and includes two Sergeants who supervise nine total Detectives. The Homicide/Assault Unit also includes a Homicide Analysis and Gang Unit led by a Commander and two Sergeants who oversee 12 total Detectives. The Homicide/Assault Unit is responsible for investigating all cases of homicide and serious assault including gathering evidence, interviewing witnesses, identifying suspects, building a case file, and working with prosecutors to bring charges against perpetrators.

The Gangs Unit is led by a Sergeant who oversees seven Detectives. The Gang Unit is responsible for investigating gang-related crimes, preventing gang activity, and educating the community about gangs.

The Robbery/Neighborhood Enforcement Team/Traffic Specialist Unit is led by a Lieutenant with support from three Sergeants (one over each function) and includes 18 Detectives and one Investigative Aide position. Four Detectives are assigned to the Robbery Unit which investigates robbery crimes. Eight Detectives are assigned to the Neighborhood Enforcement Team ("NET") which focuses on proactive enforcement of gang-related crimes, collection of gang intelligence, as well as incidents related to the homeless population and mental health. Six Detectives are assigned to the Traffic Specialist Unit which investigates fatal vehicle accidents, hit and run accidents, and non-traffic related fatalities.

It should be noted that NETs were previously decentralized with one NET assigned to each Precinct within the Uniform Division. The structure of the NETs were changed to be more centralized under the Criminal Investigations Division by the previous Chief.

The Crime Scene Unit is led by a Unit Manager with support from two Supervisors and includes a total of nine Investigators and three Latent Print Examiners. The Crime Scene Unit is responsible for preserving crime scenes, collecting evidence, and providing expert testimony in court.

Special Victims Section

The Special Victims Section ("Section") consists of five units and is supervised by a Captain. Units are supervised by Lieutenants. The following are the five units within Special Victims:

- Vice/Narcotics
- Intel/Homeland/Crime Analysis
- Special Victims/Missing Persons
- Internet Crimes Against Children
- Domestic Violence

The Vice/Narcotics Unit is led by a Lieutenant and includes a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Unit. The Vice/Narcotics Unit is staffed by two Sergeants who oversee Vice/Narcotics and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas functions. The Vice/Narcotics Unit consists of eight Detectives, while the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Unit consists of seven Detectives. The Vice/Narcotics Unit also includes a Drug/Court Detective and Investigative Aide who assist both units. The Vice/Narcotics Unit is responsible for enforcing laws and investigating complaints and violations regarding prostitution, gambling, counterfeit items and other quality of life crimes. The Vice/Narcotics Unit is also responsible for the investigation and interception of illegal substances within the County.

The Intel/Homeland/Crime Analysis Unit ("Unit") is led by a Lieutenant and consists of two Sergeants, one of each overseeing Homeland and Intel/Crime Analysis. The Homeland Unit includes three Detectives. One Detective is assigned to Homeland, one Detective is assigned to Task Force Officer/Joint Interagency Task Force and the other Detective is assigned to Task Force Officer/Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The Homeland Unit partners with the United States and Georgia Department of Justice to monitor and track data around the County relating to crimes that are terroristic in nature.

The Intel/Crime Analysis Unit is led by a Lieutenant and includes three Detectives and five civilian Analyst positions. The Intel/Crime Analysis unit is responsible for investigating suspects and providing knowledge related to crimes and suspects to the Uniform Division. The Intel/Crime Analysis unit is also responsible for generating and disseminating reports related to crime data in each precinct of the County. Reports generated by the Crime Analysis Unit help to inform the Chief of Police and Uniform Division regarding crime hot spots, crime types, and trends in crime across precincts. Furthermore, the Crime Analysis unit also provides support to Detectives within the Criminal Investigations Division to help investigate cases.

The Special Victims/Missing Persons Unit is led by a Lieutenant and includes Internet Crimes Against Children and Domestic Violence units. The Special Victims/Missing Persons function includes two Sergeants, 10 Detectives, and two Missing Persons Aides. The Special Victims/Missing Persons Unit is responsible for investigating crimes and providing support for victims related to domestic violence, sexual assaults, human trafficking, child abuse, elder abuse, internet crimes against children, and missing persons.

The Internet Crimes Against Children Unit is led by a Sergeant and includes two Detectives. The Internet Crimes Against Children Unit is responsible for investigating crimes that involve the use of the internet to exploit children.

The Domestic Violence Unit is led by a Unit Commander and includes eight Detectives, four Victim Advocates, and three Missing Persons Aides. The Domestic Violence Unit is responsible for investigating crimes related to domestic violence such as homicide, aggravated assault, and kidnapping. The Domestic Violence Unit also provide support to victims through Victim Advocates who help bridge the gap between the victim and their assigned detective to provide support to the victim.

Special Services Division

The Special Services Division is led by an Assistant Chief and is supported by two Majors who oversee the Support Services and Special Operations Sections. The Division is responsible for supporting the Department's operations related to administrative and specialized tactical units. The Division consists of the Support Services and Special Operations Sections. It should be noted that the Sections were previously two separate Divisions each led by separate Assistant Chiefs. In an effort to downsize operations, the previous Chief of Police combined the Support Services and Special Operations Sections into one Division led by one Assistant Chief.

Support Services Section

The Support Services Section ("Section") consists of 11 units and is supervised by a Major. Each subsection is supervised by managerial staff. The following are the 11 units within Support Services:

- Property Room
- Records Room
- Permits, Taxi, and Wrecker
- Advanced Technology
- Open Records
- Supply
- Mailroom
- Facilities
- Peer Support
- Chaplains
- Retired Reserve Officer (RETRO) Program

The responsibilities of the Majors include oversight of the Section and the Section Managers. The Sections are responsible for overall administrative support for Department operations.

The Property Room unit is led by a Sergeant with the support of Property and Evidence Technicians and is responsible for storing and managing personal items associated with crimes as for safekeeping or evidence. The Property Room is located within the Bobby T. Burgess Building.

The Records Room unit is led by a Police Records Manager who supervises an Assistant Records Manager, three Records Supervisors, and 16 Records Technicians. The Records Room is responsible for storing, managing, and creating records associated with Police Department operations.

The Permits, Taxi, and Wrecker unit is led by a Sergeant and is responsible for overseeing and issuing permits for various activities that require official approval. Permit types issued by the unit include alcohol sales establishments, adult entertainment establishments, carnival operators, escort/dating, pawn shops, precious medal dealers/employees, and door to door sales.

The Advanced Technology Unit is led by a Sergeant and is responsible for ordering, distributing, and maintaining critical technology and equipment, including cell phones, body-worn cameras, and geospatial positioning system Rocket routers.

The Open Records Unit is led by the Police Records Manager who supervises an Assistant Records Manager, three Records Supervisors, and 16 Records Technicians. The Open Records Unit is responsible for reaching out to the appropriate custodian of records within the Department for necessary documents and then compiles the information into a single package to ensure that all requested documents are present and any confidential information is properly redacted. The Open Records Unit is a single point of contact for the Department for answering public and legal requests for documents.

The Supply Unit is led by a Supply Coordinator, with support from two Supply Specialists, and is responsible for ordering, storing, and issuing supplies and materials to all members of the Department.

The Mailroom Unit is led by a Supply Coordinator, with support from a Mail Clerk, and is responsible for sorting incoming mail, packages, and other deliveries based on designated departments or individuals.

The Facilities Unit is led by a Major and is responsible for maintaining and managing all Department facilities. This includes maintenance for all buildings, coordination of any Department construction projects, and overseeing outsourced services such as the custodial and landscaping services the Department requires. The Facilities Unit coordinates with the County Facilities Department.

The Peer Support and Chaplain Units are responsible for providing professional and/or religious counseling to manage employee stress-induced or substance abuse problems affecting the employee's daily operations. The Department employs a clinician housed within the Internal Affairs Division to assist with providing additional support to employees. Also, the Department receives services from volunteer Chaplains that assist with any religious requests and may accompany Officers at Precincts during Roll Calls or Ride-Alongs.

The Retired Reserve Officer ("RETRO") Program is a volunteer program which allows qualified police volunteers, including those that maintain good standing and certification as a "peace officer" by the Peace Officers Standards and Training Council of Georgia ("POST"), for specified tasks and duties that can create efficiencies for the Department and improve services. Police Officer volunteers are intended to supplement and support, rather than supplant, sworn officers and civilian personnel. RETRO Officers serve in various capacities within the Department, depending on where needs are. The RETRO Program benefits the County as seasoned officers and their knowledge is retained within the County and benefits the officers by giving back and continuing to be of service.

Special Operations Section

The Special Operations Section ("Section") consists of nine units and is supervised by a Major. Each unit is supervised by a Sergeant or Lieutenant. The following are the nine units within Special Operations:

- Motors
- Strategic Traffic Enforcement Patrol (STEP)
- Strategic Traffic Accident Reduction (STAR)
- Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT)
- Bomb Squad
- Aerial Support
- K9
- Tactical Response Team
- Security

The Motors, Strategic Traffic Enforcement Patrol (“STEP”), and Strategic Traffic Accident Reduction (“STAR”) Units (“Units”) are responsible for traffic enforcement. The Motor Unit is led by a Captain, the STEP and STAR Units are led by Sergeants. The Units have a direct impact on the safety of citizens by helping to make the County roadways safer. Various public outreach activities, including driving under the influence safety checks, speed reduction enforcement and driver safety education events, are regularly held in the community. The Units include motorcycle Officers.

The Special Weapons and Tactics (“SWAT”), Bomb Squad, and Aerial Support, K9, and Tactical Response Team, and Security Units (“Units”) are led by Lieutenants and Sergeants and are responsible for providing tactical support to Federal, state, and local partners to protect the public attending large-scale events. Furthermore, the Units provide support for various special events and details, including high-risk search warrants, explosive ordinance disposal callouts, and support for dignitary visits. It should be noted that the Units includes two Pilot positions within Aerial Support to operate helicopters. The Department currently owns two helicopters but cannot operate both helicopters due to one of the Pilot positions being vacant.

Uniform Division

The Uniform Division (“Division”) is led by an Assistant Chief and is comprised of four Precincts around the County and a Community Outreach Unit. The Assistant Chief oversees four Majors (one over each Precinct) and is responsible for overseeing staffing, communications, and operations at each Precinct, in addition to within the Community Outreach Unit. The Division is the largest division in the Department with a total of 366 sworn officers and civilian staff. The Division is responsible for patrolling the County and the cities of Tucker and Stonecrest, responding to 911 calls, and interacting with citizens. The Division is divided into four precincts: North Central, Tucker, East, and South. The Division also includes a Community Outreach Unit.

North Central, Tucker, East, and South Precincts

The North Central, Tucker, East, and South Precincts (“Precincts”) are each led by a Major and are responsible for patrolling unincorporated areas of the County and the cities of Tucker and Stonecrest in addition to responding to 911 calls and interacting with citizens. The Precincts consist of Officers and Detectives who conduct criminal investigations, investigate motor vehicle accidents, enforce state laws and County ordinances, and provide continuous patrol for businesses and residential communities. Each Precinct also employs a Public Education Specialist to serve as a liaison between the Department and the community. Furthermore, Precincts are responsible for preventative patrol, incident reporting, and community outreach and relationship building within the geographic areas they protect.

Community Outreach Unit

The Community Outreach Unit (“Unit”) includes subunits such as the Mobile Crisis Unit, Police Athletic League, and the Community Policing Unit.

The Mobile Crisis Unit is a cooperative effort between the Department and the County Community Service Board and is staffed by four Officers and supervised by a Sergeant. The goal of the Mobile Crisis Unit is to find alternatives to arrest for persons who have committed a crime and are suffering from mental health illnesses or addictions. The Mobile Crisis Unit responds to calls related to suicide threats, drug/alcohol addiction, behavioral health crises, and clients with developmental disabilities. Mobile Crisis Units include licensed clinical social workers who partner with Officers. There are two Mobile Crisis Units: one covering the North and Central parts of the County and the other covering the South and East sides of the County.

The Police Athletic League Plus (“PAL Plus”) is a non-profit public benefit corporation. PAL Plus provides a safe environment for youth to reach their full potential, through partnerships with police and the community by utilizing athletics and other programs geared towards improving the quality of life of its participants. Examples of programs created by PAL Plus include an Annual Gaming with a Cop, After Dark Basketball Summer League and a Female Empowerment Program which helps to equip young women with tools to make good decisions. Other PAL Plus initiatives include administering youth intervention programs like Drug Abuse Resistance Education (“DARE”), Drug Alcohol Tobacco Education (“DATE”), and Girls Exemplifying Magnificent Strength (“GEMS”).

The Community Policing Unit works to bridge the gap between police officers and the community. The Community Policing Unit includes 11 Community Service Aide civilian positions which serve to respond to low risk calls and provide public safety support. Community Service Aides can respond to a number of low risk situations such as helping citizens and motorists, enforcing parking and abandoned vehicle ordinances, helping with crowd control at large events, and preparing reports for minor traffic accidents without injuries.

Staffing Analysis

The Department has experienced significant vacancies and turnover in both sworn and civilian positions. As of January 2025, the Department had 535 of 850 or only 63% allocated sworn positions filled. From January 2020 to December 2024, turnover in sworn officer positions ranged from 10.85% to 23.74%. The table below depicts the turnover rate for sworn positions each year in the reviewed period.

Year	Sworn Positions Turnover Rate
2020	10.85%
2021	12.87%
2022	23.74%
2023	14.80%
2024	13.49%

Source: Department-provided staffing data

As of January 2025, the Department had 143 civilian positions filled of 169 allocated civilian positions. From January 2020 to December 2024, turnover in civilian positions ranged from 9.09% to 53.21%. The table below depicts the turnover rate for civilian positions each year in the reviewed period.

Year	Civilian Positions Turnover Rate
2020	9.09%
2021	53.21%
2022	23.74%
2023	22.13%
2024	16.54%

Source: Department-provided staffing data

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

The Department outlines strategic priorities and goals within its Strategic Plan which spans three years and is evaluated annually for progress towards the accomplishment of stated goals and objectives. The Department's current Strategic Plan spans from 2024 to 2026. Key Department strategic priorities include the following:

- Reduce Crime Rates
- Enhance Recruitment and Retention
- Enhance Facilities
- Enhance Mental Health Support

Reduce Crime Rates

A primary goal of the Department is to reduce crime rates. The Department has taken many steps as outlined in their Strategic Plan to achieve this goal. Stated measures to achieve the goal include enhancing patrol operation capabilities, enhancing community policing capabilities, and increasing investigative capabilities.

Steps taken to enhance patrol operation capabilities include Computer Aided Dispatch, Records Management, and Field Based Reporting upgrades which occurred in 2024. A potential addition to enhance the Department's patrol operation capabilities would be the implementation of a Drones as First Responder program which can amplify the amount of situational awareness while lowering the number of Officers needed per call. Drones are able to deploy quickly and arrive on-scene often before Officers and relay information to dispatchers and Officers enroute and would therefore serve as an invaluable resource when responding to calls.

Steps taken to enhance community policing capabilities include the implementation and continued upgrades of the Rocket Geospatial Positioning System and Utility Body Cameras, which enable the Department to monitor actions of Officers to identify and investigate excessive uses of force or areas where additional training may be needed. Furthermore, the Department has invested in community outreach programs related to PAL Plus and the Community Policing Unit.

The following list includes examples of events hosted by the Uniform Division in 2024:

- 48 Community Engagement Zoom Meetings hosted by various DeKalb Government entities and police personnel provided presentations
- 48 Coffee with a Cop meetings which allow citizens to talk to a Police Officer within their community
- 48 Clergy Zoom Meetings

- 8 Precinct Town Hall Meetings at the start of the year and mid-year
- Career Development Program
- Female Empowerment Program
- After Dark Basketball Program
- Gaming with a Cop – Hosted 120 youth participants

Furthermore, in December 2024, the Department applied for and was selected by the United States Department of Justice (“DOJ”) to participate in the National Public Safety Partnership Program (“PSP”). As such, the DOJ provides the Department intensive training and technical assistance in various areas of policing to identify strategies that target gun, drug, and gang violence. This partnership will help the Department employ strategies to reduce crime rates and improve quality of life for community members.

Overall, the Department has worked towards increasing investigative capabilities to help reduce crime rates and solve cases. Steps taken include utilizing social media as a tool to share information with the community, as the Department maintains accounts on X, Instagram, and Facebook and uses its platforms to spread awareness of crime developments, community events, and practices to keep the public safer. Furthermore, the Department is in the process of building a Real-time Crime Center to use technology to help Officers respond to crimes.

Part of the crime reduction effort and investigative capabilities are housed within the Department’s Intel/Crime Analysis Unit which uses a variety of software to map crime and generate crime statistics. Based on M&J’s fieldwork and interviews, many of the software and applications used by the Intel/Crime Analysis Unit are outdated and obsolete, meaning there are no future updates available, and the versions are up to 10 years old. As a result, programs are slow to open and crash often, and therefore, are inefficient. Furthermore, systems are not integrated completely, and data is not centralized. Systems used such as Records Management System, CrimeView, ArcView/ArcGIS, and Accurint are not fully integrated and therefore report different statistics based on the same parameters, creating an issue of inconsistent data between systems and concerns with data validity. Furthermore, statistics generated from one program sometimes do not match those reported within a different program, creating inconsistent data.

Analysts generate weekly and monthly crime statistic reports for each Precinct which are identical in regard to the data points captured in each weekly and monthly report. Analysts have to spend a significant amount of time generating the reports and manually sending the reports to Precinct Majors weekly and monthly. The system currently used by Analysts does not have the capability to automate the reporting process and send the report to the Majors. Therefore, a significant portion of Analysts’ time is spent generating reports which could be automated with a modern system.

Enhance Recruitment and Retention

Other goals included in the Strategic Plan include enhancing recruitment and retention of Officers. The Department has experienced significant vacancies and turnover in both sworn and civilian positions over the past several years. Related to retention, the new DeKalb County Chief Executive Officer has made policy changes related to investing in Officer salaries to enhance retention and attract top-tier talent. Effective March 1, 2025, sworn Officers and recruits will receive substantial salary increases, which is intended to make DeKalb County Officers among the highest paid in metro Atlanta. As such, the County and Department recognize the downward trend in retention rates and are in the process of implementing initiatives to attract and retain more Officers.

Pension plans for law enforcement personnel have the potential to enhance recruitment and retention of Officers. After the County downsized in 2005 and then again in 2016, the County revised its pension plan and policy for County departments. The Department's current pension plan allows employees hired before September 1, 2005, to receive up to 82.5% (2.75% multiplied by 30 years of service) of a maximum pension of their average monthly salary for the 36 consecutive months in which they made the most money out of the last 120 months they worked. The current pension plan also establishes additional classes depending upon hiring date. For employees hired between September 1, 2005, and December 31, 2015, employees can receive up to 67.5% (2.25% multiplied by 30 years of service) of a maximum pension. For employees hired on or after January 1, 2016, employees can receive up to 30% of a maximum pension (1% multiplied by 30 years of service). As such, changes in the pension plan most negatively impacted those hired on or after January 1, 2016.

The Department maintains a Recruitment & Marketing plan for 2025 which defines objectives for increasing recruitment through various marketing initiatives and recruitment events. As such, the Department is making strategic efforts to enhance and document recruitment and marketing initiatives.

The Department previously implemented a Cadet Program ("program") which allowed the Department to hire a potential Officer candidate prior to entering and completing the Academy. A cadet is defined as someone who has met all qualifications for an Officer and is hired awaiting the start of the next recruit class. The program allowed cadets to be assigned to assist with miscellaneous non-sworn law enforcement support and clerical duties until they can attend the academy and therefore perform duties as a law enforcement officer. As such, the program helped to ensure that recruits were integrated into the Department even if they had to wait weeks or months to start Academy. The program was discontinued by the former Chief of Police and is not currently in place.

Enhance Facilities

An additional stated goal of the Department is the enhancement of Police facilities such as the Bobby T. Burgess building which houses Special Operations, the Property Room, Permits, Taxi, and Wrecker Unit, and the Fleet Unit. The current building suffers from outdated plumbing, electrical, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning issues in addition to ongoing mold and structural issues that do not make the building suited to support the weight of items stored in the Property Room. The Property Room undergoes annual audits based on CALEA Standard 84.1.6(d).

Based on audit reports dating back to 2020, all of the storage spaces are at capacity and present a safety concern to personnel or visitors who enter storage spaces. It has been recommended that items in the Property Room be moved to a free standing, climate controlled building that is used solely by the Property Room due to storage, safety, and security issues. Within the past couple of years, Property Room staff has made efforts to move boxes onto caged trolleys to prepare for a potential move. Also, due to the good relationship with the District Attorney's Office, Property Room staff have been able to dispose of more evidence based on aging and law, and is in the process of obtaining additional court orders to continue to do so.

Many Department fleet vehicles are stored in the parking lot of the Bobby T. Burgess building and therefore are not covered. The location of the building is not secured, and as such there is opportunity for vehicles and property to be vandalized or damaged. Due to safety and security concerns regarding the building, the Department plans to repair or replace the current building with funds from the DeKalb County Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax ("SPLOST") as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

Related to other facility issues, the Department's East Precinct and Training Division reside in the same building, which is infested with mold, rodents, and other health-related concerns which can have an impact on the morale and motivation of Officers. To help solve these issues, the Department has the plan of replacing this building with separate buildings for the East Precinct and Training Center with SPLOST funds as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

Enhance Mental Health Support

Other priorities include mental health awareness and support for the public and internal Officers and other sworn personnel. The Department operates Mobile Crisis Units to help respond to situations which include mental health concerns. Officers ride with a licensed critical social worker to help provide support for mental health illnesses and crises and serves as an alternative to arrest for people who have committed a crime and are suffering from mental health conditions. Furthermore, the Department employs an in-house psychologist/counselor to help employees manage stress-induced problems and situations. Also, the Department administers a Chaplain volunteer program to assist with religious requests and accompany Officers during their regular duties on an as-needed basis.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

The Department maintains a comprehensive Employee Manual ("Manual") with a purpose of establishing the organizational structure of the Department and setting forth basic organizational principles of the Department such as organizing by function, ensuring unity of command, delineating responsibility and delegating authority. As such the Manual includes information regarding each division's structure and duties, employee conduct, physical fitness, use of force, and information about various programs offered by the Department. The manual is detailed and is written clearly, providing a wealth of information to new hires. The manual is specific and includes defined terms that are referenced in each policy to ensure clarity.

Generally, Manual procedures appear to align with the Department's current operations, the Manual includes multiple dates to indicate when each section was last updated. M&J identified material dating back to July 2002 and as recent as January 2025. While a majority of the content is dated after 2020 and therefore has been updated somewhat recently, there is a significant amount of content that may not be up to date. Because some of the content has not been updated since at least 2020, it is possible that procedures outlined in the manual may not align with current practices. Based on the amount of content that appears to have been updated in 2022, 2023, and 2024, the Department appears to be in the process of updating select sections of the manual to achieve consistency with current processes.

Departmental policies ("General Orders") are issued by the Chief of Police and disseminated down the chain of command to Assistant Chiefs, Majors, Captains, Lieutenants, Sergeants, and to Officers. General Orders are permanent orders or guidelines, issued by the signature of the Chief of Police, and can be of a general nature or can affect the entire Department. General Orders issued by the Department follow a standard, official format and may represent additions, amendments, or rescindments of policies and procedures outlined in the manual.

The Department maintains a binder of all General Orders issued and edits made to the manual as a result of General Orders each year for documentation purposes. Based on M&J's assessment, General Orders are issued regularly, providing updates to policies and procedures and keeping abreast of changes in the field of law enforcement. The Department issued 18 General Orders in 2024.

A topic on which official guidance is limited relates to overtime. Due to the amount of overtime that is typical within first responder departments such as Police, lack of guidance surrounding overtime procedures can result in inconsistent practices between the Department's Precincts.

A topic on which the Department does not maintain standards for documentation is comp time. Comp time represents time which an employee who is exempt from overtime works additional hours (over 40 hours) and can use the additional time worked at a later date of their choosing to take time off. As such, comp time differs from overtime and from paid time-off. Comp time is tracked by supervisors within Excel but is not tracked formally within the Department's timekeeping or payroll systems.

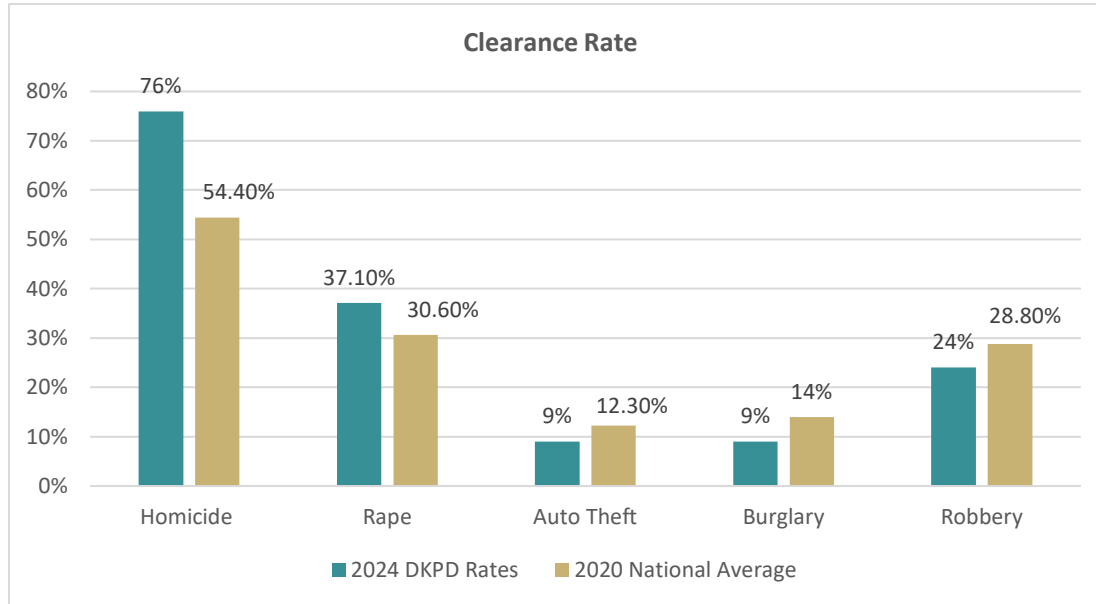
Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department tracks multiple metrics that are published in the Department's Annual Report. There are not any metrics which police departments are mandated to track and publish, but the Department tracks the most used performance metrics of crime clearance rate, call response time, and Department activity. The Department also tracks commonly used municipality metrics of crime rates and traffic accident rates.

The Department tracks call response time and assigns calls a priority level based on the severity and immediacy of the incident. The priority level system is used by most police departments, but there is no national standard for the parameters of the priority levels. The County's average response time to Priority 1 calls, meaning a call about an immediate life-threatening danger, was seven minutes and 58 seconds in 2024. The national average for Priority 1 calls is between seven and 10 minutes, therefore the County falls within the expected range. The County's average response time to Priority 2 calls, meaning a call that requires an officer to be on scene as soon as possible, was eight minutes and 57 seconds in 2024. The national average for Priority 2 calls is between 10 and 12 minutes, therefore the County outperformed the average. The County's average response time to Priority 3 calls, meaning a call that is more routine and less serious in nature, was eight minutes and 10 seconds in 2024. The national average for Priority 3 calls is between 12 and 20 minutes, therefore the County outperformed the average. The County versus national average response time is depicted in the following table.

Priority Level	Dekalb Police Department Response Time	National Average Response Time
1	7 Minutes 58 Seconds	7 Minutes to 10 Minutes
2	8 Minutes 57 Seconds	10 Minutes to 12 Minutes
3	8 Minutes 10 Seconds	12 Minutes to 20 Minutes

The Department also tracks clearance rates and participates in benchmarking to the national average. As reported in the 2024-2026 Strategic Plan, the following graph depicts the Department's clearance rates compared to the national average for various types of crimes:



As shown within the chart, the Department outperforms the national average clearance rate for crimes such as homicide and rape. The Department falls short of the national average for crimes such as auto theft, burglary, and robbery. Clearance rate data relates to the Department's primary goal of reducing crime and increasing the clearance rate for Priority 1 crimes by 3%. Benchmarking clearance rates helps the Department gauge its performance and where to focus resources and efforts towards clearance rates for certain types of crimes such as increased detectives and crime analysis efforts.

Other metrics are reported in the Department's Annual Report that relate to other functions such as internal affairs, budget/fiscal trends, community engagement, the Property Room, and permits. Metrics tracked related to internal affairs include number of investigations related to use of force, formal complaints, and informal complaints. The following table shows the number of investigations by type per year from 2022 to 2024:

Type	2022	2023	2024
Use of Force	210	176	145
Formal Complaints	45	37	45
Informal Complaints	143	177	206

As demonstrated by the table, use of force investigations have decreased significantly since 2022. Formal complaint investigations have remained relatively steady. Informal complaint investigations have increased since 2022. At the time of this report, the Internal Affairs Unit is in the process of upgrading to a new software, which will allow the Unit to increase its performance tracking and reporting abilities.

Performance data that is tracked related to community engagement includes number of community meetings or events held and types of events held. Furthermore, the Department administers Customer Service Survey Forms ("Forms") to members of the public who have has an interaction with an Officer. The Forms includes information about the survey participant in addition to a Likert scale questions regarding response time, accessibility, professionalism and courtesy, and overall level of service. Tracking of community engagement events and feedback correlates to Departmental strategic priorities to expand community outreach efforts.

The Department also reports performance data related to crime statistics on a weekly and monthly basis which is provided to Majors within Precincts to help inform Officer efforts. The following list reflects some of the data points and graphics included in the reports:

- Comparison of year-to-date property crimes to persons crimes
- Weekly, monthly, and year-to-date crime summaries for 10 crime types such as homicide, aggravated assault, pedestrian robbery, business robbery, etc.
- Weekly, monthly, and year-to-date citation summaries for 10 citation types such as arrest citation (jail), arrest citation (release), arrest misdemeanor, driving under the influence arrest, etc.
- Weekly, monthly, and year-to-date call summaries for self-initiated calls and calls for service
- Maps of each Precinct which depict where various crime types occurred

Crime reports relate to the Department's primary objective of crime reduction. Crime reports provide specific information for each Precinct to target certain crime types and areas, enabling proactive efforts to reduce crime. The Intel/Crime Analysis section also provides reports specific to homicides and provides reports to leadership based on specific requests and needs.

A primary strategic initiative of the Department as stated in the 2024-2026 Strategic Plan is to enhance recruitment and retention of Officers. The Department tracks turnover and retention rates. Based on fieldwork, the Department is not currently administering any type of internal survey to employees to gauge job satisfaction. As such, the Department could opt to perform more tracking of officer satisfaction with certain retention incentives, to aid the Department in another stated goal to enhance recruitment and retention of officers.

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

Changes in leadership and tone at the top, turnover, lack of experienced Officers and leaders, and burnout have led to low morale and a negative culture within the Department.

Based on multiple interviews, the culture under the former Chief was not positive and led to a lack of trust. Employees felt that they were micromanaged, and not given the agency to make their own decisions under the former Chief. Furthermore, staff expressed concerns with a multitude of changes in policy and procedures made within a short period of time, without regard or understanding for the Department's culture and operations prior to such changes. Staff felt that leadership was part of the reason for increased turnover rates. Since a recent change in leadership (new Interim Chief), who has risen through the ranks and been with the Department for more than 27 years, Department employees report being more optimistic about improvement in morale moving forward and a renewed sense of trust is emerging.

The Department has suffered from high turnover rates specifically since 2021, as the Department lost a total of 192 sworn personnel from 2021-2024. Also, many supervisory ranking positions have remained vacant throughout this period and presently due to retention issues. Due to high turnover, the culture and morale in the Department have deteriorated as Officers are overworked and are lacking other Officers with tenure to receive support from in the field. As such, the Department lacks a significant number of experienced, long-tenured Officers to help provide on the job training related to decision making for younger and inexperienced Officers. Due to advances in technology and equipment, younger Officers are monitored more closely and are under more scrutiny. As a result, younger Officers may not acquire confidence on the job as quickly and may be prone to more mistakes or are more likely to leave sooner.

Other culture issues relate to communications within the Department. Due to General Orders being disseminated to Officers through their chain of command, staff feel that the message can be subject to bias or influence depending on bias and opinions of who is communicating the directive. Because communication of General Orders is decentralized, there is greater opportunity for misunderstandings or variations of the General Orders to be passed on. As a result, General Orders are open to interpretation which causes inconsistencies in how the directive is followed or implemented. Also, lack of staff in supervisory roles results in communications not being as consistent. As such, there is a lack of consistency in procedures between Precincts due to communications not being streamlined.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

The Department maintains Commission for Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (“CALEA”) certification. The Department is subjected to a review process related to the CALEA certification once every four years. As of February 2025, the Department was assessed and is in the process of receiving its renewal. In addition to CALEA, the Department also obtains a Georgia Police Accreditation Coalition (“GPAC”) certification.

In December 2024, the Department applied for and was selected by the United States Department of Justice (“DOJ”) to participate in the National Public Safety Partnership Program (“PSP”). As such, the DOJ provides the Department intensive training and technical assistance in various areas of policing to identify strategies that target gun, drug, and gang violence. This partnership will help the Department employ strategies to reduce crime rates and improve quality of life for community members. Also, the Department will create a PSP Violence Reduction Strategic Plan which will include feedback from criminal justice stakeholders and partners to develop a unified vision and strategy for violence reduction in the County. The Department is scheduled to participate in a strategic planning workshop with PSP partners in March 2025, which is after the conclusion of M&J fieldwork.

The Department owns and operates its own training Academy to train new recruits in addition to a Firing Range for firearms training. As such, the Department is able to train new recruits on site as opposed to sending them to a training conducted by a third-party entity. The basic law enforcement training program at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center includes 810 hours and takes 20 weeks to complete in order to earn certification through POST. The Department provides training at its own Academy which exceeds the minimum requirement with 28 weeks of training. As such, the Department offers advanced training that is beyond the minimum requirement to become a certified Police Officer.

At the time of this report, the Department is in the beginning stages of building a real-time crime center within the Department’s headquarters. The Department will be partnering with the Department of Justice and the Georgia Department of Public Safety to identify strategies for advancing technologies. As such, the Department has made strategic investments to maintain leading surveillance and data analytics system technologies to proactively prevent and reactively solve crimes such as the real-time crime center initiative.

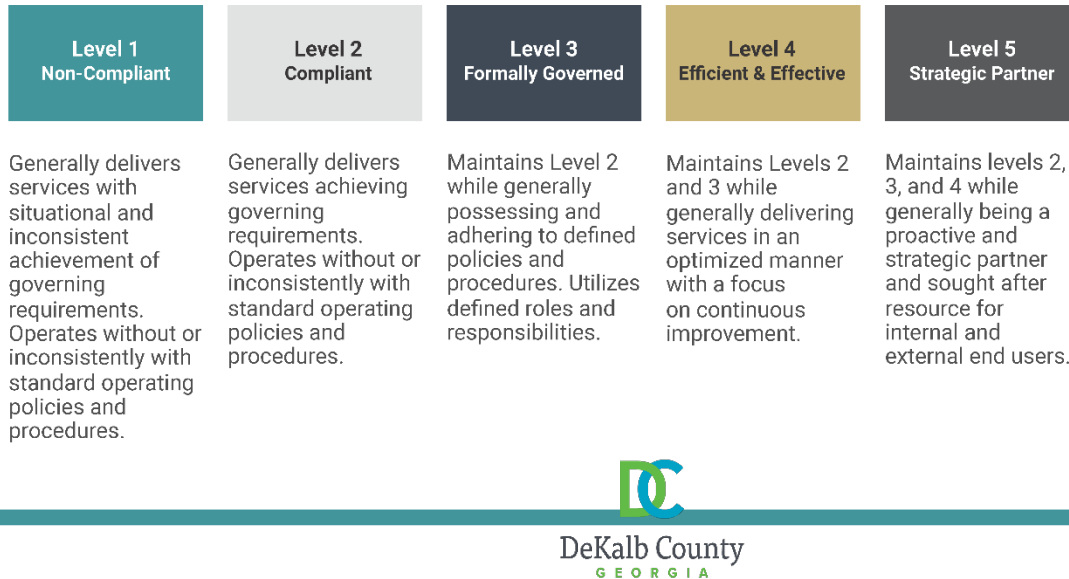
There is a strong emphasis from leadership throughout the Department on the importance of community outreach and support. In addition to regular Officer-community interactions, the Department organizes and participates in many events throughout the community to foster relationships and perceptions and to promote transparency. Furthermore, the Department introduced the Community Service Aide program in 2021, which has now grown to 11 Community Service Aides who help to improve community relations and trust in the Department while also relieving workload burdens placed on Officers. The Department also maintains four Victim Advocate positions within its Domestic Violence Unit. Victim Advocates provide support to victims by helping to bridge the gap between the victim and their assigned detective to help support the victim through the process. The Department is one of the only Counties in the metro Atlanta area to have such a program through its Police Department.

At the time of this report, the County Chief Executive Officer has implemented substantial salary increases, which is intended to make DeKalb County Officers among the highest paid in metro Atlanta. As such, the County recognizes the downward trend in retention rates and are in the process of implementing initiatives to attract and retain more Officers.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.

Maturity Model



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as in between Level 3: Formally Governed and Level 4: Efficient & Effective. While the Department is operating efficiently in many ways, the Department should take steps that help the Department achieve its strategic goals such as improving recruitment and retainment, improving Department facilities, and improving investigative capabilities regarding advanced technologies. As vacant positions are filled and systems enhanced, there will be many opportunities to move more towards Level 4: Efficient & Effective.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: Neighborhood Enforcement Teams (“NETs”) were previously decentralized and housed within each Precinct within the Uniform Division. Majors in charge of each Precinct felt that NETs were beneficial to have working closely with the Uniform Division. The former Chief changed the structure of NETs through centralization and relocation to the Criminal Investigations Division which appear to have weakened the effectiveness of the NETs.

Recommendation 1: The Department should consider returning to the former structure of the NETs which were previously decentralized and housed within each Precinct within the Uniform Division.

Observation 2: The Support Services and Special Operations Sections within the Special Services Division were previously two separate Divisions each led by separate Assistant Chiefs. In an effort to downsize operations, the former Chief of Police combined the Support Services and Special Operations Sections into one Division.

Recommendation 2: When the Department is able to fill more leadership positions, the Department should consider separating the Support Services and Special Operations Sections within the Special Services Division as the currently combined functions are vastly different with differing goals, objectives, and skill sets. Each Section should be led by an Assistant Chief.

Observation 3: The Aerial Support Unit includes two Pilot positions to operate helicopters. The Department currently owns two helicopters but cannot operate both helicopters due to one of the Pilot positions being vacant.

Recommendation 3: The Department should strategize to fill the additional Pilot position as soon as possible to ensure that operations are not adversely affected due to not being able to operate both of its helicopters.

Observation 4: One of the Department's strategic priorities is to enhance patrol operations through implementation of technologies to help reduce and respond to calls and crime.

Recommendation 4: The Department should consider the use of a "Drones as First Responder" program which can amplify the amount of situational awareness while lowering the number of Officers needed per call. Unmanned/unpiloted drones are able to deploy quickly based on GPS coordinates and arrive on-scene often before Officers and relay information to dispatchers and Officers enroute and would therefore serve as an invaluable resource when responding to calls.

Observation 5: The Department is in the process of building a Real-time Crime Center to better leverage technology to help Officers respond to crimes.

Recommendation 5: The Department should continue its efforts to build, establish, and invest in a Real-time Crime Center (including physical space, technology, and personnel) to support its efforts to enhance technological capabilities and reduce crime through proactive and strategic efforts. The County should also ensure that continued annual adequate budget is allowed for the Real-time Crime Center to operate efficiently and leverage emerging technologies in the future.

Observation 6: Select systems used within the Intel/Crime Analysis Unit such as CrimeView and ArcView/ArcGIS are outdated and obsolete without any updates available. Therefore, systems crash constantly and take a long time to load, creating inefficiency.

Systems used such as Records Management System, CrimeView, ArcView/ArcGIS, and Accurint are not fully integrated and therefore report different statistics based on the same parameters, creating an issue of inconsistent data between systems.

Systems used do not have capability to generate weekly and monthly crime reports and other routine reports automatically. Crime Analysts spend a significant amount of time generating routine reports which contain the same parameters and data points and therefore, do not have as much time to help aid Detectives with intel efforts.

Recommendation 6: The Department should consider replacing outdated systems such as CrimeView and ArcView/ArcGIS with new systems that are up-to-date and allow greater reporting capabilities than current systems. While evaluating potential new applications, the Department should consider whether applications can integrate fully with existing applications such as Records Management System. The Department should collaborate with the Department of Innovation and Technology to develop system requirements and a business case.

Observation 7: Due to downsizing the County's workforce in 2005 and 2016, the County revised its pension plan, which decreased the maximum percentage of earnings for Police Department employees hired from September 1, 2005, through December 31, 2015, and subsequently decreased the maximum percentage for those hired on or after January 1, 2016. As a result, maximum benefit percentages for pensions of Police Department personnel hired after September 1, 2005, have significantly decreased.

Recommendation 7: In an effort to increase retention and recruitment, the County should consider revising the pension plan specifically for the Police Department (and other units of the Department of Public Safety) to make the pension plan more competitive and in alignment with surrounding Atlanta metro area public safety pension offerings.

Observation 8: In an effort to increase retention, effective March 1, 2025, the County implemented base salary increases as part of a comprehensive strategy that includes additional initiatives such as a \$500 monthly housing allowance.

Recommendation 8: The County should also consider implementing a retention bonus program to provide bonuses to existing sworn Officers who meet certain criteria regarding years of service to incentivize and increase retention and decrease the likelihood of being trained by the County and then leaving for another position in another jurisdiction shortly after being trained.

Observation 9: The Department is in the process of executing strategies outlined in the Recruitment & Marketing Plan for 2025 in an effort to increase recruitment and advertise open positions.

Recommendation 9: The Department should continue working towards implementing strategic recruitment and advertisement efforts to increase visibility and market the Department to potential recruits.

Observation 10: The Department previously implemented a Cadet Program ("Program") which allowed the Department to hire a potential Officer candidate prior to entering and completing the academy. A cadet is defined as someone who has met all qualifications for an Officer and is hired awaiting the start of the next recruit class. The Program allowed cadets to be assigned to assist with miscellaneous non-sworn law enforcement support and clerical duties until they can attend the academy and therefore perform duties as a law enforcement officer. The program was discontinued by the former Chief of Police.

Recommendation 10: In an effort to prevent Officer recruits from leaving if they are awaiting the start of the next recruit class, the Department should consider reinstating the Cadet Program. The Cadet Program would also help to provide support for non-sworn law enforcement support and clerical duties within the Department.

Observation 11: The Property Room is near capacity within the Bobby T. Burgess building. The Bobby T. Burgess building is outdated and has structural issues and poses safety and health risks such as mold and water damage and is not a secure location.

Recommendation 11: The Department should continue to make efforts and progress towards identifying a solution for the storage situation within the Property Room. Ideally, the Department should build or find a new facility solely for the Property Room to operate in that is a standalone, climate controlled building due to additional security measures that are required to be in place for storing items for evidence and safekeeping purposes. The need should be considered within the County's Facilities Master Planning initiative and should assess current and future needs.

Observation 12: Many Department fleet vehicles are stored within the parking lot of the Bobby T. Burgess building and are exposed to outside elements, which can cause more wear and tear on cars and are not stored in a secure location, increasing potential for vandalism, damage, and theft.

Recommendation 12: The Department should identify a solution for storing fleet vehicles in a covered, secure place that protects vehicles from outside elements and potential damage or theft.

Observation 13: Generally, the Employee Manual procedures appear to align with the Department's current operations, and the Employee Manual includes multiple dates to indicate when each section was last updated. M&J identified material information dating back to July 2002 and as recent as January 2025. While a majority of the content is dated after 2020 and therefore has been updated somewhat recently, there is a significant amount of content that may not be up to date. Due to the amount of content that was produced between 2022 and 2024, it appears that the Department is in the process of updating its Employee Manual to be more consistent with practices.

Recommendation 13: The Department should review sections of the Employee Manual which are dated before 2020 and prioritize updating the most outdated policies first. As part of the review, a "last reviewed" date should be added to specific sections or content within the Employee Manual to document the fact that the content was reviewed and whether any updates or changes were needed. Ensuring the Employee Manual is up to date will help to promote consistency in policy and practices.

Observation 14: The Department lacks clear policies and procedures surrounding overtime.

Recommendation 14: The Department should define and document processes and procedures surrounding use and discretion of overtime to ensure that overtime practices are consistent and standardized throughout the Department's Precincts.

Observation 15: Comp time represents time which an employee who is exempt from overtime works additional hours (over 40 hours) and can use the additional time worked at a later date of their choosing to take time off. As such, comp time differs from overtime and from paid time-off. Comp time is tracked by additional employees and supervisors within Excel but is not tracked formally within the Department's timekeeping or payroll systems.

Recommendation 15: The Department should establish, and document clear procedures related to comp time and the tracking of comp time to ensure comp time is being tracked and used consistently by all Department divisions and units.

Observation 16: The Department is not currently administering internal surveys to employees to gauge job satisfaction.

Recommendation 16: The Department should consider administering internal surveys to employees to foster employee engagement and provide an anonymous outlet for employees to express concerns about their role, operations, or culture to inform the Department's efforts to increase retention and improve culture.

Observation 17: Based on M&J's fieldwork, communications within the Department are decentralized and flow through the chain of command. As a result, policies may be communicated with bias and influence depending on how they are communicated through the chain of command, increasing opportunities for misunderstanding and inconsistent implementation.

Recommendation 17: The Department should assess its current communications procedures to be more streamlined in an effort to mitigate misunderstandings and bias. Examples could include Chief announcements at roll call meetings, recorded videos, or emailed/printed messaging to help ensure consistency in messaging.

Observation 18: The Department introduced the Community Service Aide program in 2021, which has now grown to 11 Community Service Aides who help to improve community relations and trust in the Department while also relieving workload burdens placed on Officers.

Recommendation 18: As the Community Service Aide program has been beneficial for the County and has grown, the Department should increase its education efforts for the Community Service Aide program to increase public awareness. Furthermore, the Department should formalize goals and objectives for the Community Service Aide program in the future to help gauge the success of the program and the potential for expansion.

Observation 19: The Department maintains four Victim Advocate positions within its Domestic Violence Unit. Victim Advocates provide support to victims by helping to bridge the gap between the victim and their assigned detective to help support the victim through the process. The Department is one of the only counties in the metro Atlanta area to have such a program through its Police Department.

Recommendation 19: Due to the success of the Victim Advocate program, the Department should consider expanding the program to include additional Victim Advocate positions to help support victims and detectives.

Conclusion

The Police Department is operating efficiently in many ways and appears to currently have strong leaders within the Department who set a positive tone at the top. Numerous Department employees interviewed indicated that the culture within the Department has begun to shift more positively with the appointment of the new interim Police Chief.

The Department maintains CALEA accreditation and exceeds industry standards in many areas for performance. The Department maintains the vehicles, tools, and technologies needed to be effective, but its greatest hurdle is filling vacant positions and retaining officers. The County announced substantial pay increases for officers and recruits which should assist with recruiting and retention efforts. The Department also faces challenges with its existing facilities – in terms of size and condition.

We are confident that with current County and Department efforts, as well as the recommendations contained in this report, that the Police Department will continue to be an effective and valuable asset within the community. We would like to thank Department leadership for their time and resources, and for allowing us to conduct interviews with 19 individuals across levels of the Department, perform job shadowing of certain functions, tour facilities, and participate in a Police Ride-Along with an officer during shift.

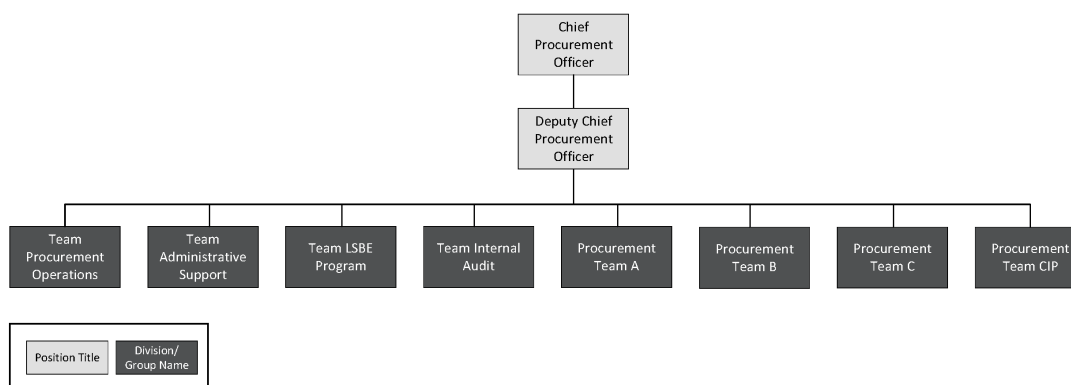
3.P Purchasing & Contracting

Introduction

The Purchasing and Contracting Department (“Purchasing” or “Department”) manages the procurement function for the County, assisting departments with the solicitation of, development of, and maintenance of County contracts for goods and services.

Organization

The Purchasing and Contracting Department is led by a Chief Procurement Officer “(CPO)” who serves as the head of the Department. The CPO is in the process of reorganizing the department. The current state as of M&J’s fieldwork, based on filled and approved positions, is depicted below:



The CPO is supported by a Deputy Director. The Deputy Director’s position is fairly new, and the majority of their time has been spent supplementing as an interim team leader and providing other support as needed.

There are three teams charged with regular procurement and contract management for the County. The teams are known as Team A, Team B, and Team C. Each team is led by a Manager, and is staffed with a mix of Senior Procurement Agents, Procurement Agents, and Technicians.

There is a separate Capital Improvement Plan (“CIP”) team dedicated solely to the Department of Watershed Management’s CIP purchasing and contracting management, and is funded by Watershed Management. Team CIP is led by a Manager, and currently there is one Procurement Technician and one Procurement Agent in this team.

DeKalb County administers a Local Small Business Enterprise (“LSBE”) program, also known as “DeKalb First”, which is implemented in compliance with a DeKalb County ordinance. This ordinance was most recently updated in 2016. The DeKalb First program is administered by the LSBE team within Purchasing. Led by a Manager, the LSBE team has three Compliance Officers (some with Senior Compliance Officer designation), an Administrative Specialist, and a Senior Customer Care Representative.

The Internal Procurement Audit team is responsible for auditing procurement functions and change management. Currently, there is one Senior Internal Auditor, who is funded by and solely dedicated to the CIP.

Supporting these purchasing functions are an Administrative Support team and a Procurement Operations team. The Administrative Support team is led by a Manager, and a recently filled Administrative Coordinator position. The Administrative Support team is responsible for HR and timekeeping functions within the Department.

The Procurement Operations team is also led by a Manager. The Department recently hired a System Administrator for this team; M&J understands this position will support iSupplier, the CV360 vendor registration portal for payment submissions. The System Administrator oversees a Senior Customer Care Representative.

Also reporting to the Procurement Operations Manager is a Senior Special Projects Coordinator, who provides onboarding training to all departmental new hires, as well as assisting with other special projects, such as the Reverse Trade Show, where DeKalb departments have booths and vendors can come and learn more about the departments and the types of goods and services they may procure within the upcoming year. The Senior Special Project Coordinator oversees a Special Project Coordinator, who assists with the Senior Special Project Coordinators projects, as well as currently taking ownership of updating the file room to move eligible files to archives, and converting others to electronic storage. The Special Project Coordinator supervises the Senior Customer Care Representative who staffs the front desk of the Department.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

The CPO provided M&J with a working strategic plan for 2024-2025 that includes a mission statement, vision statement, and the core values of the Department: Productivity, Accountability, Communication, and Teamwork. The working strategic plan contains five goals with a number of objectives associated with each goal.

- Goal 1: Continue to educate and train customers, Purchasing and Contracting staff, User Departments, vendor community, and executive leaders/stakeholders
- Goal 2: Implement online, centralized procurement system to allow for more efficient and effective procurement services
- Goal 3: Enhance the administrative and compliance services for the LSBE Program to work towards increased certifications, participation, and commitment compliancy
- Goal 4: Provide Procurement Teams with the necessary resources to assist in handling procurement funded with specialty funds, such as but not limited to SPLOST, ARP, and CIP
- Goal 5: Secure adequate staffing that will allow workload to be equally distributed and processed within reasonable service level agreements (“SLAs”) while reducing departmental attrition and maintaining and enhancing SLAs without placing undue strain on current employees.

These goals demonstrate that the CPO has a number of strategic priorities and intentions to help resolve several of the issues and challenges the CPO has identified within the Department. Unfortunately, these goals are complex, and many are interrelated. The Department's implementation progress does not appear to consider order and timing, so individual goals and objectives are being implemented without consideration of some of the integration and broader impacts. This may be causing implementation complications, and results in imbalanced implementation and perception that little is being accomplished. Additionally, individual teams have also developed their own strategic or operational plans, that do not appear to be fully integrated with the Departmental Strategic Plan.

Leadership has been working on updates to policies, processes, and systems. Leadership has expressed an intent to provide comprehensive training to staff and to end-users once processes are updated. Unfortunately, these processes are being deployed haphazardly, with limited training, and oftentimes questions and conflicts that are not resolved.

Customer service is a stated priority of the Department, and Department staff know that end user departments have negative perception of Purchasing and see it as a roadblock and hindrance to their ability to provide their core services. The Department's actions, however, do not consistently reflect that prioritization. For example, vendors who wish to do business with the County must register with OpenGov to be able to bid on open solicitations. Once awarded a contract, the vendor will need to register in the iSupplier portal within CV360 to be able to submit invoices for processing by Accounts Payable. If the vendor wishes to be a certified LSBE vendor, currently LSBE application processing, eligibility tracking, and reporting processes are manual, and staff understand that vendors will likely have to register in a third system to submit their verification paperwork, and maintain reporting. None of these systems currently have any interface or sharing of vendor information, so vendors may need to register in three systems, maintain three usernames and passwords, and potentially submit the same documentation in multiple systems.

Procurement and Acquisition

Purchasing manages all procurement and acquisitions within the County. Currently the Department is reactive to the requests and needs of the end-user departments, serving as a functional Division rather than a strategic procurement body.

Staff on the team assigned to the end-user department reviews all requisitions (requests for purchases of previously awarded contracts or authorized vendors) submitted by the end-user department, reviewing for completeness, accuracy, inclusion of supporting documentation and, as appropriate, inclusion of contract or award number. All requisitions are routed to Purchasing in CV360 after submission by the requesting end-user department. Requisitions can be assigned by user department to the appropriate team manager, but if the end-user department is leveraging another department's contract, then that routing is incorrect. The managers must manually assign all requisitions for staff review in the system, which is an inefficient use of manager's time. While the CIP team may only get a few requisitions every quarter, Teams A, B, and B may average 500 – 700 requisitions a month. Depending on dollar value, requisitions may also have to be approved by the Manager, with higher value requisitions requiring the CPO's approval.

If an end-user department wants to initiate a solicitation for a new procurement, they can submit those requests for the Procurement Request Submittal Solution ("PRSS"), a SharePoint workflow and tracking system developed by DOIT for use in submitting and tracking solicitation requests. Due to issues with communications and customer service, end-user departments may also utilize this system to try and escalate other issues and concerns, and generate visibility into other delays or roadblocks.

Procurement Agents guide end-user departments through the solicitation process to award a new contract. Agents conduct the procurement in compliance with the County's Purchasing Policy. This includes ensuring appropriate public notice of the solicitation, and posting it to the website. During M&J's fieldwork, the Department introduced OpenGov to serve as its e-solicitation system and contract management system. Elements went live during M&J's fieldwork, with the plan for full implementation over the summer.

Procurement Agents are responsible for ensuring the appropriate calendars are maintained for solicitations. Typically end-user departments recommend the committee membership for evaluation of proposals, and Agents may assist in forming committees for enterprise-wide or multi-department solicitations, and ensure that all reviewed solicitations are responsive, and also serve as the point of contact for vendors throughout the process.

The Agent and/or the Technician prepare all contracts for review. For all contracts over \$100,000, the Agent must ensure that the intended award is reviewed and approved by the Board of Commissioners. Additionally, any change orders to contracts that initially required Board of Commissioners approval must also be routed through the Board for change order approval, regardless of the dollar value or materiality of the change.

Departments are encouraged to consider the use of existing County or statewide contracts when obtaining new goods or services. Currently, the Department publishes a pdf of existing contracts on the DeKalb County website. The list on the website during M&J's fieldwork was from November of 2024, suggesting either a delay in maintaining this information, or a lack of awarded contracts for a four month period.

Contract and Lease Development and Maintenance

Purchasing develops all contracts for award, whether initiated through a solicitation process, or developed through a renewal or alternative process. Purchasing also develops leases. There is an internal contract workflow within Purchasing before contracts and leases are routed for additional legal review, before receiving the authorization to begin the signature process. Currently, draft development is triggered once the Board of Commissioners has approved the initial award. While the process varies slightly for CIP awards, the general process is for Purchasing to begin collecting all of the outstanding supporting documentation, develop the contract draft, send the draft though legal review.

Currently, the CPO must approve all contracts, and may send them back to the initiating employee for any number of reasons, ranging from substantive concerns through minor typos and grammatical corrections. If sent back, the entire workflow must be re-initiated. The Department recently introduced the PRSS SharePoint to allow for more real-time tracking of work status of in-progress solicitations, contract and lease drafts, and other workflow that require coordination outside of the Department. Staff report that end-users received limited training, and have also started using this system to escalate other issues that they feel are not being addressed within the Department.

Once executed, contract maintenance is the responsibility of the Agents and Techs responsible for that department and/or that contract. During M&J's fieldwork, the Department was in the process of implementing OpenGov to serve as its contract management system; prior to the introduction of OpenGov, information was maintained in an excel spreadsheet. End-user departments report reaching out to the Department for assistance in renewing a contract or procuring a new contract, and that the lack of urgency from the Department has resulted in having to extend contracts for months (reportedly sometimes at less-than-advantageous prices) to ensure no loss in services.

End-user departments are supposed to complete quarterly vendor performance evaluation forms. Currently, these are provided to vendors at the Notice to Proceed discussion and can also be accessed on the InDeKalb website. These are submitted via a generic inbox to the Procurement Operations team, who reviews and sends to the end-user department's assigned team Manager if the score is less than adequate. If needed, the manager may facilitate a mediation between the end-user department and vendor, or discuss potential opportunities to cure. The performance evaluations are not being aggregated or tracked long-term, so cannot be used to evaluate prior vendor contract performance.

Internal Audit

The internal audit function is currently understaffed, with only an Audit Manager and a single Senior Internal Auditor focused on and funded by CIP. The majority of time is spent attending CIP change order meetings, needs development meetings, and other meetings to monitor efforts and changes in real-time, to try and proactively identify issues and resolve them before implementation. There is a desire to expand this type of monitoring and real-time review to other types of procurement, starting with process audits for awarded solicitations. There is not a methodology for how to evaluate risk or select samples for these other reviews, although a methodology was developed for an LSBE program audit that was conducted.

Results of any reviews, or any potential recommendations for process change are documented through audit reports that are sent to the CPO for review and determination if additional action should be taken.

LSBE Program Administration

The LSBE program is designed to ensure that larger contractors, vendors, and professional firms partner with local small businesses to help ensure that DeKalb County purchases may be reinvested within the local County economy, to the extent practicable. The County requires certain solicitation responses to demonstrate compliance with this program by setting goals for participatory spend. The CPO recalls that a study was done as part of the LSBE program focus determination, but no additional evaluation or disparity studies have been conducted to determine if the LSBE program has been effective at reducing barriers or increasing small business participation.

Vendors are eligible for LSBE inclusion if their primary place of business is within the larger Atlanta metropolitan statistical area ("MSA"), as defined within the ordinance, and if the vendors meet a number of other criteria. The LSBE program offers weekly meetings with currently awarded prime contractors and current LSBE subcontractors, as well as potential vendors.

Vendors can apply to be a LSBE DeKalb member or an LSBE MSA member, based on whether the primary place of business is within DeKalb County or within a number of additional metro Atlanta counties. LSBE Contract Compliance Officers receive applications and review them for eligibility. Once certified, the certification is valid for three years. The LSBE program used to have a system for tracking this information, but have since discontinued use. The Department anticipates it will have a new system online within the next year. Currently, all vendor status is tracked through a spreadsheet. LSBE program staff aim to send reminders to LSBE program participants approximately 90 days before their current eligibility expires.

Monthly, program staff host Zoom meetings providing information about how suppliers can do business with DeKalb County. These meetings cover the iSupplier registration process, how DeKalb's procurement process typically proceeds, and there is a SPLOST segment about the specifics of the SPLOST program operations.

LSBE Contract Compliance Officers also review the compliance of prime contractors with their agreed-upon LSBE participation levels. Typically, they will review 25%, 50%, and 75% completion reports. They will also ensure that the LSBE subcontractors are receiving their pay timely and completely from the prime contractor. As detailed in the Performance Metrics/Outputs section, an internal audit noted a number of issues with compliance with this reporting requirement.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

The DeKalb County Purchasing Policy was last updated in August of 2014, even though the nature of procurement has changed significantly since that time, not the least during the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many governments have reviewed and updated the approval thresholds at least once in the last ten years, to reflect the rising cost of goods and services, to ensure the continued flow of business. Additionally, an audit by the Office of Independent Internal Audit reported in January 2018 a number of needed improvements "to address key contracting processes and functions prescribed in the NIGP and to be consistent with the OCGA".

The Department also provided a desktop procedures manual, which reflects a date of March 6, 2017, and did not contain the appendices referenced in the manual. M&J also reviewed an Employee Handbook dated February 2023. The Purchasing Policy, desktop procedures manual, and Employee Handbook should all work in tandem. Given the disparate dates of the three documents, it is likely there is conflicting information between the three.

Policies and procedures are mainly being developed as one-offs right now, leveraging memos, individual process documents, and reminder emails instead of creating and maintaining comprehensive manuals with change logs and revision dates. There does not appear to be a comprehensive guide or inventory of these documents. There is limited tracking of the one-offs, and minimal demonstrated awareness or consideration of how development of or changes to a process may impact existing processes or workflows.

The provided processes, memos, and “how-to” documents generally appear to be for useful and meaningful processes, but with publication dates dating back to 2016, it is hard to assess whether a newer memo or guide may have more updated information, or may contradict previously published information. Additionally, it is generally not recommended to use email as the primary means of communicating important information, such as reminders, process steps, or other changes, as those who did not receive the email, or those who may enter the department after the date of the email may not have access to necessary information.

Additionally, the Department is implementing new technologies without adequate formalized business process documentation, so there is not consistent understanding of existing process, or how workflow/process changes will impact the existing state, or how it may impact end-user departments. In interviews, staff recounted instances where processes were changed in real-time during training demonstrations, either based on questions or disagreements amongst leadership.

Team Managers also make process changes and develop their own team procedures for processing, communication, and review. This may help with internal team consistency, but creates concerns about preferential or inconsistent treatment from end-user departments who may hear from other departments that they received a different answer for the same question, or a different approval timeline for similar projects. The authority granted to Team Managers has resulted in inconsistent communications and procedures, and confusion and frustration in end-user departments, especially those who may leverage contracts executed by other end-user departments, which results in them interacting with a different team than the one they are primarily assigned.

The Department provided a LSBE Policy and Procedure Manual that contains some information about required program elements and program implementation, but appears to have been haphazardly updated, with the document name suggesting a 2024 update, but other elements within the manual showing older dates as the last revision date. The document also contains a scan of an individual’s commercial driver’s license, with none of the identifying information redacted.

The Internal Audit team develops biannual work plans, outlining proposed audit projects for the upcoming six months. Given staffing levels within the Department, and that one staff member is funded by and dedicated to supporting CIP, there is limited capacity to implement the work plan as designed. No risk matrix or methodology was provided to support the selection of the proposed audit projects, although the work plan notes it was developed in collaboration with the CPO, based on:

- Previous audits that require internal follow-up reviews
- On-going activity audits
- Pending follow-up audits from the office of Independent Internal Audit
- Audits initiated by the CPO

Internal audit leading practice is to establish an organization’s risk profile, considering the risk appetite and assessing residual risk. Based on the risk profile, an Internal Audit plan should be developed that prioritizes reviews based on identified risk level.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

Service Level Agreements (“SLAs”) for the procurement process were reportedly last established in 2014. They are included in materials for the Department, both for desk manuals for staff as well as presentation material. Staff reported that these SLAs may not reflect the current state, and are not actively tracked or reported on currently.

The Department provided a working strategic plan for 2024-2025 to M&J as part of the assessment. Each goal in the strategic plan includes a number of performance measures. While some of the performance measures may reflect meaningful KPIs (“percent of solicitations meeting SLAs”, for example), the majority of the performance measures are workload indicators or outputs, and not KPMs or KPIs. Others may be harder to evaluate, such as “procurement requests collaboratively initiated” or “business processes support SLAs”.

Under the ordinance adopted, LSBE should be tracking seven measures and reporting on these measures semi-annually:

- Number of LSBEs certified and decertified
- Number and financial impacts of mentor/protégé relationships
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the LSBE in relation to the achievement of DeKalb County’s goals set forth under [the ordinance], including the utilization of LSBEs on contract
- Number of LSBEs subcontracted by non-LSBE prime contractors
- Number of LSBEs contracted as a prime contractor
- Total LSBE contracted dollars and total contracted dollars
- Other information about DeKalb First, if requested by the Board of Commissioners or the Chief Executive Officer

Currently the Department is not consistently tracking or reporting on these measures in compliance with the ordinance. An undated audit conducted by the Department’s Internal Audit team reported that the last semi-annual report was completed in 2019, and the last report was submitted in July of 2022. M&J also reviewed a semi-annual report covering the period of January – June 2024. The January – June 2024 semi-annual report does not appear to contain the required measures. The CPO states that systems used to administer the LSBE program failed to adequately track the required data and therefore the Department could not produce the required reports. This internal audit report identified a number of other issues with the LSBE program, such as a high number of Prime vendors that fail to submit monthly utilization reports, and no verifiable presence of the ordinance-required trade specific categorization of potential LSBE contractors.

For other common metrics, Department staff are not sure if CV360 can track or produce the type of reporting necessarily to track common KPIs such as “time to convert requisitions” which can be used to set benchmarks for the percentage converted under the SLA.

M&J would propose the Department develop, or begin tracking, metrics such as the percentage of requisitions converted within three business days, the percentage of contracts that include either an LSBE prime or sub, and either the quantity of dollars spend with LSBE vendors, or the % of County expenses spent with LSBE vendors (with some exemption of mandatory expenses, such as rent and utilities).

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

There is an air of stress and anxiety that permeates the Department. Staff generally believe that the CPO understands the challenges and issues facing the department, and has ideas on how to improve the department. The challenge is that there are too many deficiencies, and the need to address all of them has resulted in a perception that there is not meaningful progress in any area, but lots of talk of future progress and updates. The CPO feels personally responsible for the direction of the Department, and it appears that the CPO struggles to delegate responsibility for resolving issues and moving the Department into an improved future state. Some of the efforts to assist with ensuring efficient use of time and ensuring that workload is being managed and SLAs are being met has resulted in a culture of micromanagement, scrutiny of use of time, and an environment of distrust.

Staff vacillate between believing that there are unilateral decisions being made without adequate communications, engagement, and buy-in, and belief that there is too much focus on consensus and buy-in that hampers decision-making and progress.

In interviews, staff reported that the CPO expects and demands perfection, and often times that desire for perfection can impede progress, both in terms of hiring and training, but also as it relates to policy and process updates. Staff feel that they are frequently and quickly criticized for work that has errors, or when something is missed, but there is little appreciation or compliments when work is done well, or they are able to manage overwhelming workloads.

Staff perception is that communications are haphazard, incomplete, and rarely feel intentional or proactive. In meetings where items are being discussed in real time, there can be conflict, confusion, or differing guidance between members of leadership.

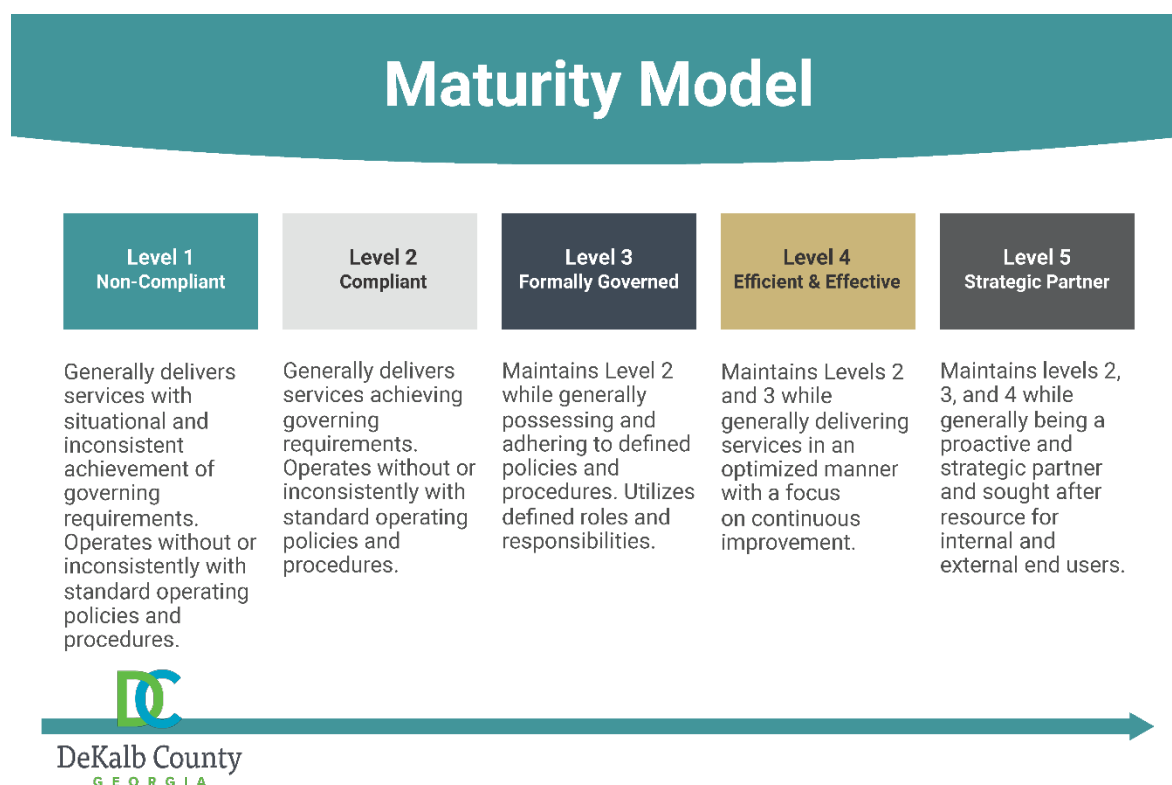
Staff feel that resolution of the current state of the Department will require additional support and authority from County leadership to make needed changes, and ensure compliance with updated policies and processes.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

Purchasing and Contracting hosts an annual Reverse Trade Show, where current and prospective vendors can meet with County departments and current prime contractors to learn more the types of foods and services they may utilize, as well as learn more about government procurement processes and best practices.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Department as Level 1: Non-Compliant. Solicitations are procured in compliance with County procurement requirements, but many policies and procedures are outdated, and Team Managers also have the ability to create additional operating practices and requirements. Most decisions, reviews, and approvals must go through the CPO, which creates an ineffective and slow internal process and negatively impacts customer service and operating efficiency. Department leadership has a number of ideas on how to improve the department, and is continuously adding additional ideas for future implementation. Ultimately, the focus is spread in too many directions, so decision-making comes across as haphazard and situational, and may conflict with previous guidance or expectations.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: Department leadership has identified a number of deficiencies in current operations, and has created a number of goals and objectives to try and remedy these deficiencies. As a result of trying to address too many issues, corrective action efforts are not comprehensive and implementations may be perceived as haphazard and inadequate to address much broader issues.

Recommendation 1: The Department needs to reassess the strategic plan, and understand the predecessors and dependencies, to develop a comprehensive timeline for goal and objective implementation.

Observation 2: Currently, Department Agents and Technicians are responsible for the solicitation of awards, as well as contract development and negotiation, and contract maintenance and renewals. In governments comparable in size and budget to DeKalb, contract maintenance is sometimes a separate function.

Recommendation 2: The Department should establish a separate contract maintenance division, to reduce some of the workload of the three procurement teams, and to create separation between the purchasing function and contract management function.

Observation 3: Currently, all change orders to contracts that initially went to the BOC must go back to the BOC for approval. These may be small change orders that are for minor revisions to scope specification, or for minor adjustments based on updating pricing at the time of award.

Recommendation 3: The Department should update requirements so that change orders that do not materially change the scope, or are for less than a certain percentage (either individually or in aggregate) can be approved by the CPO rather than require BOC approval.

Observation 4: End-user departments are encouraged to piggyback on existing County contracts, or make use of statewide contracts for cost-savings and time savings. The Department publishes a list of currently awarded contracts on the website, but it is a pdf that is not user-friendly.

Recommendation 4: The Department should work with DOIT to determine if either OpenGov or CV360 can provide real-time access to active contract data, to encourage departments to leverage existing contracts to obtain needed goods and services. Any solution should include a functional search feature.

Observation 5: The CPO is operating too tactically to succeed strategically, including review and approving all contract and lease drafts. By being too deep into operational processes, the CPO is a hindrance to effective and timely workflow and customer service, and this lack of timely resolution may result in the need to extend existing contracts, or impact the timely delivery of goods and services necessary for the County's core business functions. Staff also report that process delays often result in the expiration of the prices included in quotes, and may require renegotiation or increased costs.

Recommendation 5: The Department should create or update contract and lease templates to ensure consistency and reduce the need for the CPO to review the entire agreement at a detailed level. The County should also consider adopting updated thresholds for what award value requires the CPO's approval for execution.

Observation 6: Vendor forms are provided by end-user departments in the Notice to Proceed meetings, and are available on the InDeKalb intranet for employees. Currently, the Department does not proactively send these forms to the end-user departments for completion each quarter. Additionally, reported performance is not aggregated for each vendor, to better understand comprehensive performance or allow for prior performance considerations during contract renewal or consideration of new awards.

Recommendation 6: Purchasing and Contracting should work with DOIT to develop a process to automatically email the end-user department a form for vendor evaluation each quarter. The form should be auto-filled with the award number, contract vendor, period of performance, and scope. These should be maintained in a database for use in more comprehensively evaluating prior vendor contract performance.

Observation 7: Currently, internal audit's non-CIP projects are based on collaboration with the CPO and a set of criteria noted in the semi-annual work plans. The current work plans do not reflect the use of a risk profile or risk methodology in the development of the audit schedule, which is leading internal audit practice.

Recommendation 7: Once the Internal Audit function is staffed, staff should be developing the audit plan based on risk profile and prioritizing reviews based on identified risk level.

Observation 8: LSBE has not been comprehensively reviewed and is not reporting semi-annually on the measures identified in the ordinance. The OIIA review identified a number of concerns, and current tracking does not allow for adequate evaluation of value or impact.

Recommendation 8: The County should consider a program evaluation for the current operating model of the LSBE program. Additionally, the County may want to consider a disparity study, designed to assist in determining if there is disparity in opportunities available and awarded to LSBE program vendors and other non-participating and/or non-eligible vendors. This study should focus on understanding program intent, program design, and any available program outcomes.

Observation 9: The Department has a purchasing policy, as well as a number of manuals and processes. Many of these are out of date, and changes are introduced in new processes, memos, and emails, rather than through updates to existing documentation.

Recommendation 9: The Department needs a comprehensive inventory of existing documents that captures initial publication date, change log of any revisions, and a last review date. Once the inventory is complete, they should do business process mapping to understand how processes are currently being performed, and to identify discrepancies and potential leading practices that may be in place in one team and not others. Once the inventory of available documents and the business process mapping are complete, a single comprehensive set of processes should be established, with standards for regular review and revision. This comprehensive set of processes should then be reviewing for opportunities for business process improvement.

Rather than restating processes or attaching excerpted policies and processes in multiple documents, reference should be made to the original document, so that changes are incorporated by reference into other documents.

As processes change, revisions should be made in the appropriate process manual and a change log tracked to understand effective dates of changes.

Observation 10: The working strategic plan lacks consistently actionable KPIs, and in some instances proposes workload data as performance measures.

Recommendation 10: The Department should inventory available data within OpenGov and CV360 to understand what is currently being tracked and could potentially benchmarked and leveraged moving forward. Where there are gaps and inadequate data, the Department should work with DOIT to determine if additional fields could be leveraged for additional reporting. This inventory, along with the gap analysis, should be evaluated to determine what data points should be leveraged to assist in quantifying progress towards strategic priorities.

Observation 11: Typically, purchasing card (“pcard”) functions are housed within Purchasing to ensure end-users aren’t failing to utilize contracts for expenditures, and to ensure that pcards are not being used to avoid purchasing policies. Currently this role is in Finance and the Purchasing and Contracting Department does not regularly review or analyze pcard activity.

Recommendation 11: The County should consider moving the Pcard Administrator role into the Purchasing and Contracting Department. If the County chooses not to make organizational changes, it should introduce processes for Purchasing to regularly review pcard activity for compliance with existing contracts, the County’s purchasing policy, and assess for potential activity that may indicate the need for a contract or agreement.

Conclusion

Purchasing and Contracting is at a crossroads: a number of issues were not addressed for several years, and now there are a number of deficiencies in operations that must be addressed. Department and County leadership must ensure that deficiencies are understood, and that dependencies and predecessors are implemented in the correct order to ensure cohesive, intentional addressing of issues and movement towards a more effective department that is seen as a collaborative partner. A comprehensive strategic plan, with action items and a comprehensive timeline, will be an effective tool in guiding efforts and ensuring that everyone is moving forward in the same direction.

Leveraging the recommendations contained in this report will help the Department understand its gaps and challenges, and assist in strategically moving the purchasing and contracting functions forward, while helping ensure customer service and effective workflow. We thank Department leadership for their time and assistance in coordinating interviews with 13 department staff.

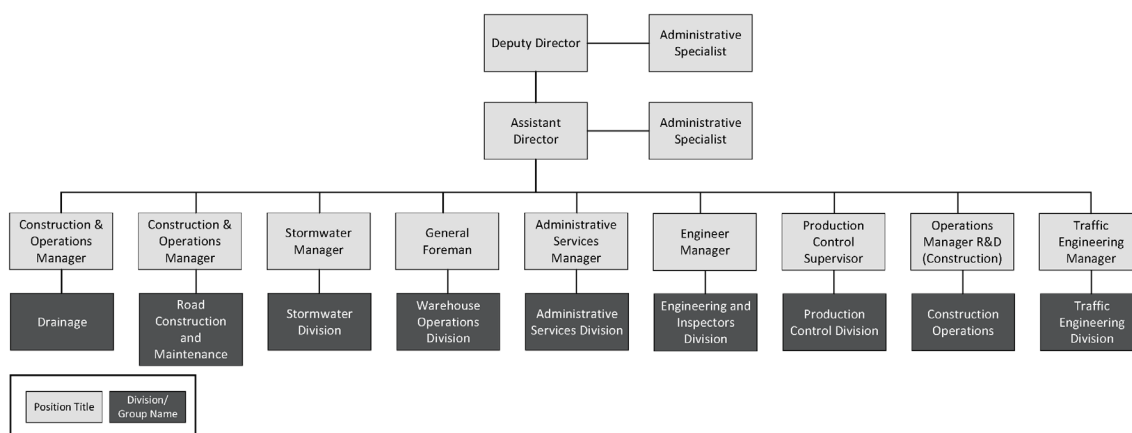
3.Q Roads and Drainage

Introduction

The DeKalb County Roads & Drainage (“R&D”) Division is housed within the DeKalb County Public Works Department and is responsible for performing needed repairs, maintenance, construction and upgrades to the County’s roadway system, including bridges, stormwater, drainage structures, and traffic control devices.

Organization

R&D is led by the Deputy Director and consists of nine divisions. The divisions are led by seven Managers, a General Foreman, and a Production Control Supervisor. The following organizational chart shows R&D’s primary organizational structure and functions.



The nine R&D divisions include the following:

- Drainage
- Road Construction and Maintenance
- Stormwater
- Warehouse Operations
- Administrative Services
- Engineering and Inspectors
- Production Control
- Construction Operations
- Traffic Engineering

Drainage

The Drainage Section (“Section”) is led by the Construction & Operations Manager who receives support from an Office Assistant position and includes approximately 70 positions (not including the Construction & Operations Manager). The Section includes positions with titles of Superintendent, General Foreman, Crew Supervisor, Heavy Equipment Operator, Equipment Operator, and Crew Worker. The Section is responsible for managing and maintaining the drainage systems that prevent flooding and water-related damage to roadways and surrounding areas.

Road Construction and Maintenance

The Road Construction and Maintenance Section (“Section”) is led by the Construction & Operations Manager who receives support from an Office Assistant position and includes approximately 52 positions (not including the Construction & Operations Manager). The Section includes positions with titles of Superintendent, Engineering Tech, General Foreman, Crew Supervisor, Heavy Equipment Operator, Equipment Operator, and Crew Worker. The Section is responsible for the planning, design, construction, repair, and ongoing maintenance of roadways and related infrastructure.

Stormwater

The Stormwater Section (“Section”) is led by the Stormwater Manager who receives support from an Administrative Specialist position and includes approximately 11 positions (not including the Stormwater Manager). The Section includes positions with the titles of Stormwater Program Supervisor, Flood Management Supervisor, Geospatial Information Systems Analyst, Engineer Tech, Senior Engineer, and Environmental Project Coordinator. The Section is responsible for reducing the number of pollutants that enter the stormwater drainage system, also known as the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (“MS4”), to the Maximum Extent Possible (“MEP”) in order to protect water quality and satisfy water quality requirements. This is accomplished through MS4 inspections, maintenance and design, public education, and community involvement. These methods are used to find and eliminate the sources of the pollution that enters the MS4.

Warehouse Operations

The Warehouse Operations Section (“Section”) is led by a General Foreman and includes approximately seven additional positions with titles of Crew Supervisor, Equipment Operator Senior, Supply Specialist, Crew Worker, and Warehouse Worker. The Section is responsible for managing the storage, inventory, and distribution of materials and equipment necessary for road construction, maintenance, and stormwater management. The Section ensures R&D has the tools, materials, and supplies required to efficiently carry out its responsibilities while also maintaining accurate records and managing resources effectively.

Administrative Services

The Administrative Services Section (“Section”) is led by an Administrative Services Manager who receives support from a Public Relation Specialist. The Section includes approximately 14 positions (not including the Administrative Services Manager) with titles of Fiscal Officer, Requisition Technician, Accounting Technician, Payroll/Personnel Assistant, Fleet Maintenance Technician, Crew Worker, Equipment Operator, and General Foreman. The Section is responsible for administrative duties to support R&D such as processing payroll and assisting with human resources matters, budgeting and procurement, and maintenance.

Engineering and Inspectors

The Engineering and Inspectors Section (“Section”) is led by an Engineer Manager who receives support from an Office Assistant. The Section includes approximately 12 positions (not including the Engineer Manager) with titles such as Staff Engineer, Office Assistant, and Engineering Technician. The Section is responsible for overseeing the technical aspects of road construction, maintenance, drainage systems, bridge maintenance, and ensuring compliance with engineering standards, regulations, and quality requirements. The Section is also involved in the design and construction phases of projects, and in the ongoing inspection and maintenance of roads and drainage-related infrastructure.

Production Control

The Production Control Section (“Section”) is led by a Production Control Supervisor and includes two additional positions: an Engineering Technician and an Administrative Specialist. The Section is responsible for managing and overseeing the efficient production, scheduling, and coordination of materials, resources, and work processes required for road construction, maintenance, and drainage projects. This Section ensures that projects are completed on time, within budget, and meet quality standards by effectively managing the flow of work and resources.

Construction Operations

The Construction Operations Section (“Section”) is led by an Operations Manager and includes approximately 23 positions (excluding the Operations Manager). Position titles within the Section include Superintendent, General Foreman, Crew Supervisor, Heavy Equipment Operator, Equipment Operator, and Crew Worker. The Section is responsible for: construction of new sidewalks and road projects; speed hump installation; bridge maintenance and upgrades; and retention pond maintenance.

Traffic Engineering

The Traffic Engineering Section (“Section”) is led by a Traffic Engineering Manager who receives support from an Administrative Specialist and includes approximately 41 positions (excluding the Traffic Engineering Manager). Position titles within the Section include Traffic Signal Technician, Traffic Signs & Marketing Installer, Sign Fabricator, Traffic Signal Installer, General Foreman, and Crew Supervisor. The Section is responsible for the planning, design, operation, and management of traffic systems and infrastructure. The Section helps ensure that roadways are safe, efficient, and well-optimized for the movement of vehicles and pedestrians. The Section focuses on addressing traffic flow, safety issues, and the overall transportation experience for all road users.

Staffing Analysis

R&D has experienced fairly low turnover from January 2020 to January 2025. The table below depicts the turnover rate for each year in the reviewed period.

Year	Turnover Rate
2020	8.80%
2021	13.09%
2022	14.77%
2023	8.47%
2024	10.45%

Source: Division-provided staffing data

The average turnover rate for municipal construction positions is generally around 20%. R&D was below this number for all years in the reviewed period. Of the employees who departed their position within the reviewed period, the average tenure in R&D was 2,928 days (8.02 years). Of the current employees as of January 2025, the average tenure in R&D is 4,157 days (11.39 years). The average headcount within the reviewed period was 197 employees. As of February 2025, R&D has 215 positions filled and 29 positions vacant.

R&D’s tenure for employees is well above most other County departments.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

R&D's strategic priorities align to those for the Public Works Department as R&D is a division with the Public Works Department. Based on the Public Works Department's 2022 Strategic Plan, goals that relate to R&D include:

- Achieve and maintain national accreditation with the American Public Works Association ("APWA")
- Implement and maintain the CityWorks platform for service work orders
- Minimize and reduce accidents and injuries

Other strategic priorities are within the following areas and are further described below:

- Road Construction and Maintenance
- Traffic Engineering
- Stormwater
 - Floodplain Management
- Compliance

Road Construction and Maintenance

R&D leverages a combination of County funds and Local Maintenance Improvement Grants for resurfacing roads. In 2018, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax ("SPLOST") funds were allocated for resurfacing efforts; the use of these funds is managed through the SPLOST management team housed in the CEO's Office, although the day-to-day implementation may be managed through R&D. The County prioritizes resurfacing efforts using road condition, a Pavement Condition Index ("PCI") system similar to the one in use by the Georgia Department of Transportation. County roads are rated on a 0 to 62 scale, where 0 is the best and 62 is the worst. The use of PCI allows the County to prioritize resurfacing roads with the highest PCI ratings. PCI ratings of 30 – 33 indicate warning for reconstruction and future resurfacing, and ratings of 34 and above indicate the need for more immediate resurfacing and/or reconstruction. As of 2023, R&D had a significant backlog of road resurfacing needs, which R&D anticipates eliminating within the next five years. R&D is moving towards providing street proactive maintenance and resurfacing, which has been aided by the addition of SPLOST funding.

Traffic Engineering

R&D is in the process of replacing traffic signs within the County as outlined within its Traffic Sign Retroreflectivity Manual to maintain compliance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices established by the Federal Highway Administration ("FHWA"). The FHWA updated guidelines for compliance in 2015 and 2018, including requiring all regulatory, warning, and ground mounted guide signs failing to meet minimum levels to be replaced and street name and overhead guide signs failing to meet the minimum levels to be replaced. Based on the R&D Traffic Sign Maintenance Plan/Program presentation from 2024, R&D is in the process of obtaining additional resources to conform to FHWA guidance. Due to not having the staff/resources to conform, as of March 2024, R&D is in the process of implementing a 6-year plan to conform to guidance which includes:

- Fund traffic sign inventory assessment
- Restaff missing sign crews
- Add funding for operations, material, grant match, and contractor assistance

To date, R&D has assigned an individual to inspect, assess, and create a list of signs that need replacing. Furthermore, R&D has awarded contracts for removal and replacement of failing traffic signs in the County.

Stormwater

R&D is prioritizing the need to manage stormwater-related infrastructure more proactively based on the Stormwater Fee Rate Evaluation (“Evaluation”) in conducted in 2023. The Evaluation determined that the Stormwater function’s current resources were insufficient to manage infrastructure needs in a proactive manner and adequately fund current programs. To help the Stormwater function focus on routine/preventive/predictive maintenance, corrective maintenance, capital improvements and renewals, and regulatory compliance in a proactive manner, the R&D increased stormwater utility fees in 2023 for the first time since the function was created in 2003. As such, the increased revenues will allow the Stormwater function to focus on the following proactive efforts:

- Add assessment tools to identify pipes that are at risk of failure
- Develop capital improvement plan reserve for unplanned capital projects
- Invest in future system improvements/proactive capital renewal

The County received a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (“MS4”) permit which is a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (“NPDES”) permit (“permit”) in 2024 which expires in 2029 and authorizes R&D to discharge pollutants from public stormwater systems to waters of the United States. The permit required the development and implementation of a comprehensive Storm Water Management Program, which is defined in the County 2024-2029 Stormwater Management Plan (“plan”) developed by R&D.

As part of the MS4, R&D implements an Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (“IDDE”) Program (“Program”) with the goal of detecting and eliminating illicit discharges, illegal connections, and illegal dumping by conducting dry weather screening on outfalls and following the enforcement procedures detailed in the County’s Enforcement Response Plan. R&D also implements an Industrial Facility Stormwater Discharge control program to monitor and control pollutants in stormwater discharges from industrial facilities into the MS4.

As part of the permit, R&D must implement a program which incorporates structural and source control measures to reduce pollutants from runoff from commercial and residential areas that are discharged from the MS4 and include a schedule for implementing such controls. R&D’s program includes elements such as MS4 structure inventory and map, MS4 inspection and maintenance program, planning procedures and an IDDE program. Procedures for both programs are defined within attachments to the plan. Measurable goals associated with both programs include:

- Update inventory and map of MS4 structures
- Conduct inspections of MS4 structures so that 100% of structures are inspected within 5-year permit term
- Conduct dry weather screening inspections on 100% of total outfalls within 5-year permit term
- Provide documentation on spill occurrences

An additional goal of R&D's Stormwater function is public education and community involvement. R&D strives to educate residents about water quality issues and the importance of protecting water resources. R&D encourages citizens to become involved in the efforts to improve water quality and increase the use of green infrastructure and low impact development best management practices. Public outreach activities include storm drain marking, online resources and brochures, recycling and school presentations.

Floodplain Management

R&D maintains goals related to preventing and correcting flood damage by controlling development and construction such that would minimize the community's risk to life and property, preserve, and enhance the natural floodplain function. The County participates in the National Flood Insurance Program and the Community Rating System ("CRS"). R&D manages the County's CRS and is the responsible authority for submitting annual re-certification applications to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. R&D also serves as the repository for elevation certificates, flood insurance rate maps, flood insurance studies, and other associated data. In 2024, R&D commissioned a Floodplain Species Assessment with the purpose to identify the presence of federally listed, proposed threatened and endangered species and their designated critical habitats within unincorporated areas of the County.

R&D generated an Annual Progress Report in 2024, as required by the CRS, related to the DeKalb County Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan which includes strategies that will reduce/eliminate potential hazards to life and property especially in areas with histories of repetitive flooding. Select goals/mitigation actions were:

- Enact preventative measures in planning and zoning of development projects by ensuring that undeveloped or sparsely developed areas of the County are undisturbed and protected with 2 protective buffers.
- Implement property protection measures such as modification of existing buildings, subject to hazard risk through floodproofing techniques or their surroundings.
- Increase public education and awareness measures such as creating brochures to be distributed across public libraries and selected government buildings and education at town hall meetings.

Compliance

A key strategic priority of R&D is to maintain compliance with federal and state agencies which provide permits and grants to R&D to better serve the County. As such, R&D participates in reporting on a regular basis for compliance purposes as outlined by federal and state agencies. R&D maintains active permits, certifications, and grants such as the following:

- Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System ("MS4")
- Authorization to Discharge Under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System ("NPDES") Stormwater Discharges Associated with Industrial Activity
- Community Rating System ("CRS")
- Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities ("BRIC") award
- Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

R&D maintains various standard operating procedures (“SOPs”) which outline procedures for core R&D functions and programs. R&D maintains SOPs on the following topics:

- Vehicle Inspection Report – No date
- Pothole Repairs How Its Done – No date
- Industrial Facilities Inspection Procedures – 2024
- Illegal Discharge Detection and Elimination Program – No date
- Highly Visible Pollutant Sources Inspection Procedures – 2024
- Floodplain Management Workflow – No date
- Traffic Engineering Flowchart – No date
- CityWorks Workflow for Service Requests and Work Orders – No date
- Roads and Drainage Final Plat Review Checklist – No date
- Roads and Drainage Sketch Plat Review Checklist – No date
- Roads and Drainage Land Development Plan Review Checklist – No date

R&D maintains a Public Works – Roads and Drainage Employee Policy/Procedure Package which includes policies and procedures related to:

- Personnel
- Uniforms and Equipment
- Equipment and Maintenance
- Safety Policy
- Use of Protective Equipment
- County Vehicle
- Risk Management

The Roads and Drainage Employee Policy/Procedure Package also include standard operating procedures (“SOPs”). A majority of the procedures were last updated in 2024, but some include documentation last updated in 2009 and 2017.

R&D maintains a Traffic Signal Preventative Maintenance document with the purpose of defining the Traffic Engineering Section’s preventative maintenance strategy. The Traffic Signal Preventative Maintenance document does not contain a date but appears to have been last updated in 2007.

R&D maintains a Traffic Sign Retroreflectivity Manual (“Manual”), which establishes uniformity and standards for traffic signs on public roads. The manual is dated June 2011.

Sections within the manual include:

- Reflectivity Requirement
- Compliance Dates
- DeKalb’s Current Status
- Plan Objective
- Plan
- Budget/Cost
- Plan Recommendation/Conclusion
- References
- Appendix

R&D maintains a Roads & Drainage Inspection Procedure and Coordination Handbook (“handbook”) which serves as a guide for R&D personnel and offers a detailed framework for efficient and effective infrastructure repairs. The Manual does not have a date indicating when it was produced or updated.

R&D maintains a 2024-2029 Stormwater Management Plan which identifies the condition of all subbasin outfalls throughout the County and makes recommendations for replacement of, and additions to undersized outfalls for the County's design criteria of a 25-year storm with future development. The 2024-2029 Stormwater Management Plan also includes attachments to the Plan which define requirements for R&D programs and procedures. The Industrial Facilities Inspection Procedures attachment provides guidelines related to inspection procedures, data management, enforcement and follow-up, and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System annual reporting. The MS4 Inspection and Maintenance Program attachment provides the plan of activities to be undertaken to satisfy the provisions and specific requirements of the Structural and Source Control Measure section of the Stormwater Management Plan including MS4 inventory and mapping, inspections, and maintenance criteria. The Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination Program attachment provides the plan of activities to satisfy the provisions and specific requirements of the program to detect and eliminate illicit discharges, illegal connections, and illegal dumping. The attachments were for the 2024-2029 Stormwater Management Plan currently in place and appear up to date.

R&D also maintains a Snow and Ice Removal Plan which outlines strategies for winter weather preparations. The Snow and Ice Removal Plan was produced in 2022.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

R&D is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified R&D during our fieldwork. Appendix A contains all of the R&D-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

R&D reports performance metrics within the following areas:

- Monthly Reporting
- Road Construction and Maintenance
- Traffic Engineering
- Stormwater
 - Floodplain Management

Monthly Reporting

R&D generates monthly reports related to asphalt operations which include County projects such as potholes, safe-ups, tree removals, patching and resurfacing. The report includes the number of projects completed for each month and year-to-date. R&D also generates monthly reports related to each of its sections which include common data points such as open and completed projects, work volume logs, number of accidents or injuries, new hires, completed training, overtime budget, critical unmet needs, and work completed through R&D's various contracts. Data points within the Resources and Support operations report which differ from other monthly reports include Division budget, professional contracts, price changes, and facility and environmental issues. As such, R&D participates in monthly reporting to track performance and workload of each function and R&D's budget and contracts.

Road Construction and Maintenance

R&D tracks workload data pertaining to weather-related road maintenance such as whether roads are treated for ice during a winter storm.

R&D tracks data related to its Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant administered by the Georgia Department of Transportation. R&D produces annual Resurfacing Status Reports which provide information regarding the streets, length, district, super district, resurfaced/underway, date which patching began and was completed, and the date resurfacing began or was completed. Metrics tracked align with R&D's goals of keeping roadways safe and clearing its existing backlog to help transition repaving efforts to be more proactive.

Traffic Engineering

Additional metrics tracked by R&D include traffic signs manufactured in-house, percentage of signs installed which are replacements of losses due to traffic accidents, number of signs and sign types replaced, number of sign inspections, number of defective signs/poles. Metrics tracked align with R&D's goals for replacement of traffic signs in compliance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices established by the FHWA.

Stormwater

Related to the MS4 permit, R&D is subject to annual reporting requirements to report on measurable goals outlined within the permit. R&D tracks and reports metrics related to the MS4 annual reporting. For the MS4 program, R&D tracks and reports the following:

- MS4 inspections recorded in County's asset management database
- MS4 maintenance recorded in the County's work order completion database

For the IDDE program, R&D tracks and reports the following:

- Inspection results within the Illicit Discharge Inspection Form
- Illicit Discharge Inspection Forms, notes, forms lab results, enforcement actions, status and any other information related to complaint stored within County's secure database

For the Industrial Facility Stormwater Discharge control program, R&D tracks and reports the following:

- Number of industrial facilities in the inventory
- Number of industrial facilities added to or removed from the inventory
- Complete list of the industrial inventory
- Number of industrial enforcement actions, type of actions, and the result of actions

The metrics and data tracked and reported by R&D directly relate to MS4 goals and compliance with the permit.

Floodplain Management

Related to floodplain management, R&D completes Annual Progress Reports which include measures taken as part of the County Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan. Metrics tracked and reported include an assessment for buildings with vulnerabilities of the economy through their exposure to flooding with direct losses, needed repairs or replacement (occupancy type, total buildings, total buildings damaged, total building exposure in dollars, total losses to buildings in dollars, loss ratio of exposed buildings to damaged buildings). Furthermore, to maintain certification for the CRS program, R&D tracks and reports Evaluation Certificates and Floodproofing Certificates on an annual basis. R&D's metrics and mitigation strategies tracked and reported as required by the CRS program directly relate to floodplain management goals.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

Based on numerous interviews with R&D employees across various levels, there was a current theme in that employees believed the work culture and environment within R&D was very positive. Employees believe that they have support from R&D leadership and that they are all working toward common goals. R&D's below average turnover rate and high average tenure for employees are indicative of a positive and meaningful work environment.

R&D has also created a Professional Development and Career Path Guide that details multiple learning and training options for R&D employees as well as defined career paths within R&D. R&D leadership prioritizes continuing learning and defining job advancement opportunities to continue to support retaining talent.

Based on direct observations and walk-throughs, R&D has multiple facilities needing repair. The most significant need is the warehouse. The warehouse is beyond its storage capacity and the physical structure is dated.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

R&D is housed with the DeKalb County Public Works Department, which was accredited by the American Public Works Association in 2023. The Public Works Department will maintain accreditation until 2027.

In 2020, the R&D Deputy Director was invited to join the APWA Top Ten Public Works Leaders Review Committee, which is designed to foster innovation and share leading practices among public works industry leaders across the nation.

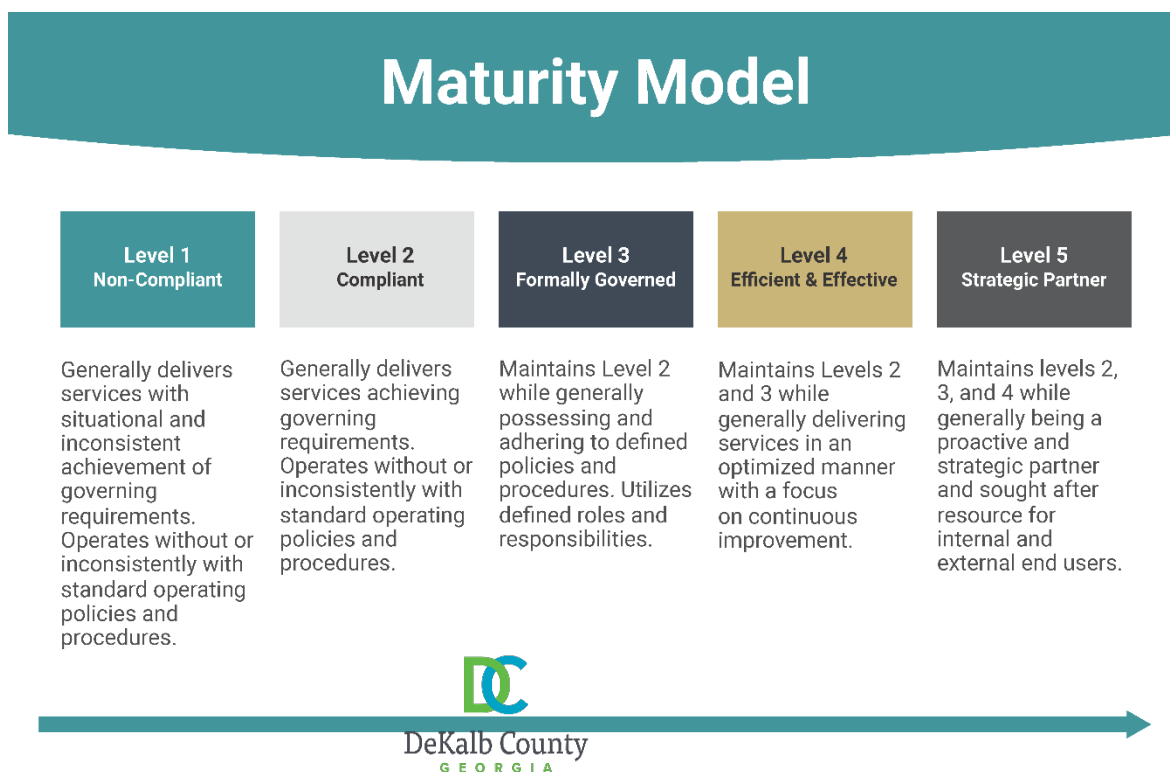
R&D was the first municipality in metro Atlanta to implement Queue Jumpers, which allow buses, which are in a restricted travel lane, to receive a green indication at the traffic signal while other vehicles remain at a stop condition at the same intersection, thus giving buses priority in the queue. The implementation of Queue Jumpers was an initiative within the traffic signal priority control system within DeKalb County in 1999, which was the first of its kind to be implemented in the United States.

The Traffic Engineering Section manages traffic operations from a specially designed and fully functional Traffic Control Center. As of 2020, two thirds of the County's traffic signals were in coordinated systems and connected to the Traffic Control Center with dozens of miles of fiber optic cable.

R&D works with external entities such as the International Municipal Signal Association, American Public Works Association, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government to provide pathways to certification and additional training to Division employees.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of R&D as in between Level 2: Compliant and Level 3: Formally Governed.

R&D's primary functions are tactical in nature and there appear to be fairly consistent policies and processes, however much of the policy and procedure documentation has not been updated in several years.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: R&D maintains multiple manuals, policies, and SOPs which do not have a date or have not been updated within the past eight years or more.

Recommendation 1: R&D should review sections of the manuals, policies, and SOPs which are dated before 2022 and prioritize updating the most outdated policies first. As part of the review, a “last reviewed” date should be added to specific sections or content within the manuals, policies, and SOPs to document the fact that the content was reviewed and whether any updates or changes were needed. Ensuring the manuals, policies, and SOPs are up to date will help to promote consistency in policy and practices.

Observation 2: As of 2023, R&D had a significant backlog of road resurfacing needs, which R&D anticipates eliminating within the next five years. R&D is moving towards providing street proactive maintenance and resurfacing, which has been aided by the addition of SPLOST funding.

Recommendation 2: R&D should continue its efforts to reduce its backlog of road resurfacing needs, as well as developing more formal and proactive methods to maintain and resurface roads.

Observation 3: The Federal Highway Administration updated guidelines for uniform traffic control device compliance in 2015 and 2018, including requiring all regulatory, warning, and ground mounted guide signs failing to meet minimum levels to be replaced and street name and overhead guide signs failing to meet the minimum levels to be replaced. R&D is in the process of replacing and retrofitting traffic control devices, but is currently not in compliance with the related Federal Highway Administration updated guidelines.

Recommendation 3: R&D should continue its efforts and seek additional funding if needed to come into compliance with updated traffic control device guidelines from the Federal Highway Administration.

Observation 4: The County received a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (“MS4”) permit which is a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (“NPDES”) permit (“permit”) in 2024 which expires in 2029 and authorizes R&D to discharge pollutants from public stormwater systems to waters of the United States. The permit required the development and implementation of a comprehensive Storm Water Management Program, which is defined in the County 2024-2029 Stormwater Management Plan (“plan”) developed by the R&D.

Recommendation 4: R&D should continue to prioritize implementing the program tasks, tracking of data, and data reporting related to the 2024-2029 Stormwater Management Plan.

Observation 5: Based on direct observations and walk-throughs, R&D has multiple facilities needing repair. The most significant need is the warehouse. The warehouse is beyond its storage capacity and the physical structure is dated.

Recommendation 5: The County should begin planning for the expansion of the current warehouse or development of a new warehouse. Any planned expansion or development should allow for future growth.

Observation 6: The Traffic Engineering Section manages traffic operations from a specially designed and fully functional Traffic Control Center. As of 2020, two thirds of the County's traffic signals were in coordinated systems and connected to the Traffic Control Center with dozens of miles of fiber optic cable.

Recommendation 6: R&D should continue its efforts to increase County traffic signals that are connected to the Traffic Control Center.

Conclusion

The Roads and Draining Division is operating efficiently and effective in many ways and appears to have a positive culture and bond among its workers. Division morale appears to be high and leadership has created a positive work environment celebrating its employees.

The Division should continue to formally update its policies and procedures and invest in efforts to meet governing requirements related to stormwater and traffic control devices. The Division should also continue to reduce its backlog of roadway maintenance and obtain the necessary investment to more proactively address roadway maintenance.

We are confident that with current County and Division efforts, as well as the recommendations contained in this report, that the Roads & Drainage Division will continue to support County infrastructure used by citizens and stakeholders on a daily basis. We would like to thank Division leadership for their time and resources, and for allowing us to conduct interviews with 10 individuals across levels of the Division, tour facilities, and perform job shadowing of certain functions.

3.R Sanitation

Introduction

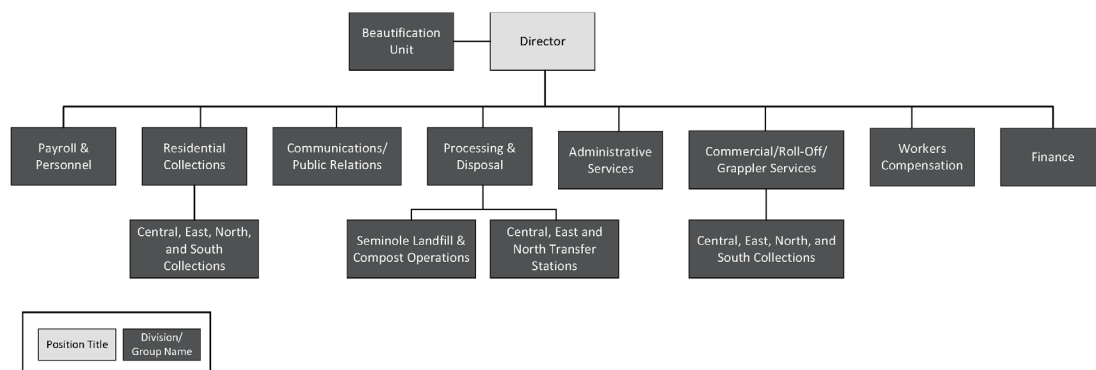
The Sanitation Division (“Division”) is within Dekalb County’s Public Works Department. The Sanitation Division is responsible for providing an efficient, cost-effective, sustainable, and integrated solid waste program for residents and businesses within its service area, with a sustained focus on customer service excellence.

Organization

The Sanitation Division is led by the Division Director (“Director”) and includes 641 allocated positions. The Division includes the following nine primary functions:

- Beautification Unit
- Payroll & Personnel
- Communications/Public Relations
- Residential Collections
- Processing & Disposal
- Commercial/Roll-Off/Grapppler Services
- Administrative Services
- Workers Compensation
- Finance

The following organizational chart depicts the structure of the Division:



Beautification Unit

The Beautification Unit (“Unit”), branded Keep Dekalb Beautiful Inc. (“KDB”), is led by the Director and is an active community and environmental steward tasked with protecting, enhancing, and maintaining the County’s streets, rights of way, roadways, intersections, and County-owned properties. The Unit includes 86 positions that report to the Director who receives support from the Assistant Director, a Superintendent, and two Special Projects Coordinators. The Unit includes Litter Abatement, Administrative Services, and Mowing Services/Curb Bumping sections. Positions within Litter Abatement include a General Foreman, two Crew Supervisors, 29 Refuse Collectors, and a Custodian. Positions within Administrative Services include a Payroll/Personnel Assistant and three Customer Support Assistants. Positions within Mowing Services/Curb Bumping include two General Foremen, eight Crew Supervisors, 24 Crew Workers, 10 Equipment Operators, and two Grounds Maintenance Worker positions.

The Unit collaborates with contracted vendors to execute year-round community stewardship efforts. The Unit collaborates closely with community groups, civic associations, individuals, and County departments through continuous beautification initiatives, roadside enhancement activities, public education and resident engagement and empowerment.

Payroll & Personnel

The Payroll & Personnel Section (“Section”) is led by a Payroll Personnel Supervisor and includes two Payroll Personnel Assistants, two Administrative Specialists, and three Office Assistants. The Section is responsible for managing Division payroll-related processes, new hire orientations, and benefits support. The Section serves as a human resources liaison for the County Human Resources Department. As such, the Section assists Division employees with basic human resources functions and ensures timesheets are reported properly and accurately to ensure payroll runs efficiently.

Communications/Public Relations

The Communications/Public Relations Section (“Section”) is led by a Public Relations Manager and includes a Public Relations Specialist and a Senior Public Outreach Specialist. The Section is responsible for creating and implementing communications plans for the Division that include media and advertisement campaigns to market and publicize operations within the Division. Furthermore, the Section utilizes social media platforms such as Facebook and X to enhance community communications and awareness.

Residential Collections

The Residential Collections Section (“Section”) is led by the Residential Collections Assistant Director (“Assistant Director”) and is the largest Section within the Division including 351 positions. The Assistant Director is responsible for overseeing daily operations and for coordinating with the County’s Fleet Management Division to ensure that sanitation vehicles are maintained and replaced properly. The Section includes nine General Foremen, 18 Supervisors, five Crew Leaders, one Safety Officer, one Geospatial Information Systems Analyst (“GIS”), and one Senior GIS Analyst. Remaining positions include drivers and sanitation workers who operate sanitation trucks and collect solid waste.

The Section is responsible for collecting solid waste, yard waste, and recycling which is hauled to the Seminole Landfill. Recycling is processed using a third-party provider. Collection days for solid waste are Monday through Thursday, with Friday reserved as a make-up day to ensure weekly routes and pickups are completed. The Section is divided into four sanitation lots based upon geographic regions of the County - Central, East, North, and South collections lots. The four collections lots serve as the start and end points for all sanitation routes and house sanitation vehicles. Each lot is managed by a Supervisor who is responsible for ensuring that routes are completed, addressing any staffing issues or shortages, mitigating accidents and injuries, and conducting safety trainings in addition to overseeing daily lot operations.

Processing & Disposal

The Processing & Disposal Section ("Section") is led by a Processing & Disposal Assistant Director and includes approximately 104 positions. The Section includes the County's three Transfer Stations and the County's Seminole Landfill & Compost operations. The Transfer Stations Superintendent leads the County's three transfer stations. The Seminole Landfill & Compost Operations Superintendent leads the Seminole Landfill & Compost operation. Positions under the oversight of the Transfer Stations Superintendent include two Crew Leaders and six Supervisors in addition to transfer station operations positions. Positions under the oversight of the Seminole Landfill & Compost Operations Superintendent include three Assistant Superintendents, one Engineer Review Officer, three Supervisors, two Crew Leaders, one Safety Officer, and additional positions relation to landfill operations.

The County owns three transfer stations sectioned into the North, Central and East regions of the County. Once solid waste is collected by the Residential Collections and Commercial/Roll-Off/Grappler Services Sections, it is brought to a transfer station closest to the lot which the staff members collecting the waste are assigned. For the North, Central, and East lots, waste is taken to transfer stations depending on which is closest to the end point of the route. At transfer stations, waste is processed and transferred to larger trucks to be transported to the County's Seminole Landfill which is the final destination. All South lot collected waste is brought straight to the Seminole Landfill ("landfill") as the South lot is located close to the landfill.

The County owns and operates the Seminole Landfill & Compost operation which is located in the Southern region of the County. The Seminole Landfill & Compost operations accepts solid waste, discarded furniture, old appliances, yard trimmings, building materials, and small deceased domestic animals. The landfill also accepts items for recycling and maintains compost and allows the public to collect compost free of charge. Residents and DeKalb County licensed business can pay to dispose of items at the landfill.

The landfill also includes a Green Energy Facility which captures and converts methane gas into electricity, generating enough clean energy to meet the needs of 3,000 homes annually while removing annual greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 3,300 vehicles. The County also generates revenue through selling electricity to Georgia Power. DeKalb is the only government in Georgia to implement such a program. Also, the landfill includes a Renewable Fuels Facility which has a fueling station on-site and generates electricity from converting landfill gas to renewable natural gas. Through the building of this facility in 2012, the County has invested in sanitation trucks that run on compressed natural gas, with the goal of adapting the entire fleet to run on natural gas over the next few years. The Division currently operates a majority of its vehicles with natural gas. The facility also generates revenue for the Division through the injection of excess renewable compressed natural gas into the Atlanta Gas Light natural gas pipeline to other fueling stations.

Commercial/Roll-Off/Grappler Services

The Commercial/Roll-Off/Grappler Services Section ("Section") is led by the Commercial/Roll-Off/Grappler Services Superintendent and includes approximately 69 positions. The Section includes two General Foremen, nine Crew Supervisors, three Crew Leaders, and one Safety Officer position in addition to staff members such as drivers and waste collectors. The Section is divided into four lots, the same as the Residential Collections Section (North, Central, East, and South), and collects commercial solid waste, bulk items upon request, and special collections of items such as tires, construction materials, etc. upon request. The Section collects waste and recycling from businesses within DeKalb County. Similar to the Residential Collections Section, recycling is hauled to the Seminole Landfill and processed by a third-party. Processes to transport waste and recycling remains the same as for the Residential Collections Section. Waste is taken to transfer stations depending on the lot and then eventually is transported to the landfill. The Section also includes a welding shop where the Section repairs and/or delivers dumpster containers to businesses. The Section also includes customer service positions responsible for assisting businesses with initiating service, scheduling bulk or special pickups, billing, and collections.

Administrative Services

The Administrative Services Section ("Section") is led by the Administrative Services Manager and includes one Customer Care Supervisor, three Customer Support Assistants, and 19 Customer Service Representative positions. The Section includes a Call Center and is responsible for providing customer service to the public for sanitation services. The Section assists primarily residential customers with bulk pickup and special pickup payment and scheduling, and billing. While the Call Center is able to help commercial customers with basic information such as balances, the Call Center may escalate commercial requests to the Commercial/Roll-Off/Grappler Services Section. The Section also operates the front desk which assists customers who come to the office in-person with initiating or terminating services and picking up roll-carts. The Section also manages special accommodation programs provided for residents such as a program where customers with mobility issues can have their garbage picked up outside of their house rather than from the curb.

Workers Compensation

The Workers Compensation Section (“Section”) is led by a Workers Compensation Adjuster and includes an Administrative Specialist. The Section is responsible for working closely with Safety Officers within the Division to investigate accidents or injuries that occur on the job for staff primarily within the Residential Collections and Commercial/Roll-Off/Grappler Services Sections as they involve operating sanitation trucks and equipment. The Section is responsible for investigating any workers compensation claims that are made after an on-the-job accident or injury occurs. Also, the Section resolves claims related to covering medical expenses for an on-the-job injury or illness. The Section also collaborates closely with attorneys and investigates approximately five to 13 claims per month. The Section works closely with the Workers Compensation Unit within the County Finance Department.

Finance

The Finance Section (“Section”) is led by a Senior Fiscal Officer and is a newly created Section within the Division, created in 2024. The Section is responsible for creating and managing the Division’s budget. As such, the Section gauges needs for the upcoming budget year to create budget requests and monitors the budget and spending throughout the fiscal year to ensure that the Division maintains its budget adequately. Also, the Section completes various reporting functions within the County’s financial management system to compare actual spending to budgeted spending and to accurately maintain the Division’s general ledgers.

It should be noted that the Section was initially created and filled in 2024 and was initially intended to include a Billing Analyst, Billing Specialist, and a Delinquent Collections Officer. Based on M&J’s fieldwork, the Billing Analyst, Billing Specialist, and Delinquent Collections Officer positions currently report directly to the Director. The positions are responsible for financial duties related to processing sanitation service billing and payments, assisting customers with inquiries regarding billing and payments, and tracking outstanding bills and managing delinquent payments.

Staffing Analysis

M&J requested information related to the Division’s approved, vacant, and filled positions by year for the past five years, however such information was not provided. As such, information within this section relates to information and insights gathered during conversations with Division staff.

The Division suffers from the most turnover within its Residential Collections and Commercial/Roll-off/Grappler Services Sections. Within the Residential Collections Section, the most turnover is within the Refuse Collector positions, which is experienced the most within the North lot. Also, allocated staffing levels are currently inadequate for workload within the East lots. Reasons for turnover within the Commercial/Roll-off/Grappler Services Section include recruits obtaining commercial driver’s licenses and other specialized training through the Division’s training process and then leaving for the private sector. Other issues include wages that are not competitive with the private sector. Also, it is more efficient for the Commercial/Roll-off/Grappler Services Section to recruit experienced drivers with relevant certifications, which the Section has struggled with due to lack of pay incentives for more experienced drivers.

Strategic Priorities, Key Duties and Responsibilities

The mission of the Division is to provide an efficient, cost-effective, sustainable, and integrated solid waste management program for residents and businesses within the County's service area, with a sustained focus on customer service excellence. Based on fieldwork, the Division's main objectives are to provide excellent customer service, keep drivers and staff safe by promoting safe driving practices, and promote and practice sustainability.

Residential and Commercial Collections Services

The Division provides customer service to the public through its residential and commercial collection services and its Call Center. The Division's residential and commercial daily operations are focused on prioritizing driver safety and limiting accidents. To help promote safe driving practices by commercial and residential drivers, the Division has implemented a number of initiatives. The Division has implemented processes that each Supervisor within the North, Central, East, and South lots observe crews in the field weekly. Furthermore, Safety Officers perform monitoring of drivers by following behind sanitation vehicles when the drivers may or may not be aware of their presence. The Division has implemented daily mandatory "Tailgate" safety meetings in the morning before going on routes to educate drivers on common accidents and how to prevent such accidents. Also, the Division has implemented mandatory weekly general safety meetings which focus on a specific safety topic each week and identify best practices to follow.

The Division administers a "Top Gun Safety Challenge" ("Safety Challenge") to incentivize employees to focus on safety and to significantly reduce all preventable accidents and incidents. The Safety Challenge awards a winning lot each quarter which is determined by the least number of preventable accidents for the quarter. The winning lot is presented with the Top Gun Trophy of Excellence and receives a cookout with a raffle for door prizes.

Steps taken to improve residential and commercial customer services through solid waste collection include the planned implementation of Rubicon, a software solution that helps to optimize sanitation routes for more efficient services. Also, the Division is in the process of implementing Samsara, a technology solution which includes artificial intelligence to help detect safety events and record dashcam video including front and rear-facing cameras. As such, investments in technology will allow for the Division to optimize driver routes and ensure efficient routing and to monitor drivers more effectively and efficiently and identify opportunities and needs for additional training. Such investments in technology will help the Division provide better customer service and generally operate more efficiently by optimizing routes and ensuring safe driving practices.

Related to equipment, staff have expressed concerns with the safety of automatic side loader units. Due to the arm being on the passenger side and the driver having a half-seat where the driver cannot fully sit down, the vision on the driver's side is limited, which creates a blind spot. Furthermore, the Division must maintain a robust maintenance plan and be proactive with maintenance as a majority of sanitation equipment is older and therefore requires additional maintenance. The Division lacks spare vehicles to use when other vehicles are being repaired.

Sections related to residential and commercial services suffer from the highest turnover rates. Staff expressed concerns related to the length of the hiring process being cumbersome and therefore, providing applicants with time to find competing jobs. Staff also expressed concerns related to wages not being competitive with the private sector. As the Division provides in-house training to obtain a commercial driver's license in addition to other specialized training, the Division suffers from recruits obtaining specialized training and then leaving for the private sector to obtain higher pay. Due to the lack of a pay incentive for experienced drivers (with commercial driver's licenses), the Division struggles to obtain experienced drivers. Also, the Division struggles with allocated staffing levels within its East lot.

To help mitigate turnover rates specifically within its North lot, the Division runs a shuttle bus where employees who live closest to the Central and East lot areas of the County are transported to the North lot and brought back to the Central and East lots at the end of their shift. The Division also started a retention plan within the North lot to gain feedback from North lot employees in an effort to help new hires assigned to the North lot better acclimate.

Administrative Services

The primary function of Administrative Services is to manage the Call Center which includes answering calls, creating and maintaining commercial accounts, responding to emails, and completing roll-off container requests. The Call Center also includes the front desk and lobby staff who greet visitors at the Division's headquarters/customer care center, collect applications for requested services, verify documents, receive payments, and resolve routine concerns. To ensure that customer service is efficient and effective, the Division provides quality assurance to monitor calls and response times and ensure that call center staff is cross trained on various functions. Also, the Division tracks and monitors metrics associated with Call Center's customer service to identify any improvements needed to customer service.

Sustainability

The Division has implemented many initiatives to achieve its strategic priority of promoting and practicing sustainability. Through KDB, which was created in 2016, the Division offers a comprehensive program that facilitates group and individual participation in improving DeKalb communities. Within KDB, the Division offers programs such as Roadside Enhancement and Clean Communities. The Roadside Enhancement program is tasked with advancing the County's roadside enhancement initiative, which includes mowing, herbicide treatments, curb bumping, and tree trimming services on rights of way within unincorporated DeKalb County. The Clean Communities program is tasked with advancing the County's litter abatement and illegal dumping initiatives within unincorporated DeKalb County. Some programs offered within the Clean Communities program include community cleanup kits and adopt-a-program which provides the public an opportunity to serve their community through Countywide litter collection and street beautification activities.

Furthermore, the Division has implemented a number of strategic initiatives with the County-owned Seminole Landfill (“landfill”) to produce clean energy such as the Green Energy Facility and Renewable Fuels Facility. The Green Energy Facility, a first of its kind in Georgia when built in 2006, captures and converts methane gas into electricity. The Renewable Fuels Facility became operational in April 2012 and was the first facility in the United States to have a fueling station on-site and generate electricity, renewable natural gas, and renewable compressed natural gas from landfill gas at one location. The landfill gas is collected from the decomposition of the approximately 2,000 tons of waste brought into the County’s landfill daily and then turned into renewable natural gas by removing all compounds except for methane. This renewable natural gas is then partially compressed on-site to produce the renewable compressed natural gas that is sent to the Cleveomont Road fueling station where it is used by DeKalb County’s sanitation vehicles and by the public. The excess renewable compressed natural gas is injected into the Atlantic Gas Light natural gas pipeline to other fueling stations.

The Division is currently working towards an entire fleet operating on compressed natural gas. Currently, a majority of the Division’s sanitation trucks run on certified natural gas. Any new sanitation trucks acquired by the Division are also running on compressed natural gas. The Division also operates four compost pickup locations (including the landfill) in which yard trimmings collected from residents are recycled into compost and available for DeKalb residents at no cost.

Assessment of Guiding Documentation

The Division maintains a significant amount of standard operating procedures (“SOPs”) which mostly govern processes for the residential and commercial sanitation services. A majority of SOPs relate to procedures for employees driving sanitation vehicles on topics such as transfer stations, dumping, attendance standards, and safety Tailgate meeting policies. Other SOPs relate to employee conduct or issues which relate to all Division employees. All SOPs are distributed to appropriate Division employees and require employees to print and sign their names for receipt and acknowledgement of the SOP. M&J received approximately 48 SOPs on unique topics, with about one-third of SOPs last updated in 2023 or 2024. M&J is uncertain of when the remaining two-thirds of SOPs were last updated to reflect actual practices.

The Division maintains a New Employee Handbook (“handbook”) governing the Sanitation Division and Beautification Unit. The handbook includes general Division policies and procedures such as dress code, hours of work and overtime policy, attendance policy, and vehicle safety.

The Division maintains a 2025 Communications Plan (“Plan”) which guides the Division’s 2025 communications protocol. The Plan includes external and internal communications channels, branding elements and initiatives, and communications rules of engagement.

Performance Metrics/Outputs

The Department is required to report on a number of performance measures as part of the annual budgeting process. Departmental recognition or utilization of these measures outside of that process is inconsistent. Our analysis is limited to those identified by the department during our assessment. Appendix A contains all of the department-reported performance measures collected during the annual budget process.

The Division tracks performance metrics related to residential and commercial services, safety incidents, and customer service functions. In addition, the Division tracks environmental compliance with its landfill.

Residential and Commercial Services

The Division tracks a number of metrics and productivity data related to its goal of providing excellent customer service and promoting safe driving practices.

Related to residential and commercial services, metrics tracked and reported include productivity indicators such as:

- Number of loads a driver services per day
- Duration of hauls
- Special collections tonnage
- Number of loads transferred to landfill for roll-off services

Also, the Division sets requirements for the number of loads that each driver within each transfer station should load from residential properties to the transfer stations per day. The Division tracks metrics related to daily commercial and residential route counts by driver such as number of stops, hauls, tons hauled, and hours worked to calculate productivity. The Division then calculates a productivity scorecard for each lot on a monthly basis. The Division also tracks the number of missed pickups by driver per day and calculates misses per lot on a monthly basis.

The Division maintains a quarterly Sanitation Safety Metrics Scorecard which includes all Division units involved in providing sanitation services in the field such as Keep DeKalb Beautiful, landfill, transfer stations, and sanitation lots. The Division tracks the types of preventable accidents that occur within each quarter by unit.

The Division's criteria for unsafe driving incidents includes the following:

- Too fast for conditions
- Following too closely
- Poor judgement
- Struck fixed object
- Failure to yield
- Improper lane change
- Misjudged clearance
- Improper backing

The Division utilizes the safety-related performance data to target safety education and training efforts and understand in which Unit(s) the most preventable accidents occur and therefore where to dedicate resources. The Division benchmarks data to previous years and months to understand trends in preventable accidents.

The Division tracks the status of any sanitation vehicles and dumpster containers that are in the process of repair by the welding shop within the Commercial/Roll-Off/Grapppler Services Section. For containers, the Division tracks the business which the container belongs to, container issues, date admitted to the welding shop, and the work order associated with the maintenance. For sanitation vehicles, the Division tracks the reason for maintenance, past issues with vehicles, and the status of vehicles within the shop.

For commercial services, the Division maintains a Commercial Route Audit Sheet by which records related to each commercial business served are maintained to track payments and any delinquent balances for each business account.

In November 2024, the DeKalb County Office of Independent Internal Audit (“Audit”) issued a Final Report related to an Audit of Recycling Processes within the Department. Findings of the Audit included a 38% contamination rate from July to September 2024 in recycling material collected by the County from residential and commercial customers. Higher contamination rates can result in a lower vendor discount and a higher processing fee for the County. The benchmark contamination rate in single-stream residential recycling typically ranges from 15% to 25%. The Audit also included a finding related to opportunities to further strengthen County residents’ awareness of recycling requirements and best practices. Based on the management response to findings outlined in the Audit, the Department is currently in the process of addressing the Audit’s findings.

Administrative Services

Related to the Call Center, the Division generates weekly scorecards for each representative that include attendance, average handling time, average hold time, and average quality score (derived by a live quality agent that listens to phone calls and scores calls based upon criteria). The Division maintains the following service level agreements for its Call Center:

- Average handling time under five minutes
- Average hold time under one minute
- Average quality score of 95% and above

Furthermore, the Administrative Services Section tracks monthly calls answered, lobby visitors for both residential and commercial, roll-off container requests fulfilled, and applications received for new residential services, garbage roll carts, and recycling roll carts. As such, the Division tracks performance metrics related to the Division’s goal of providing excellent customer service. The Department has the potential to enhance existing performance measures for the Administrative Services Section through converting metrics to key performance indicators that are tied to strategic goals and objectives such as average time to process applications and fulfill requests and the most common types of calls/issues/questions received through the Call Center.

Landfill Environmental Compliance

The Seminole Landfill must comply with Georgia Environmental Protection Division rules and regulations related to ongoing environmental monitoring, management of gas collection systems, and efforts to divert waste through recycling programs, including a household hazardous waste collection program. The Division currently engages Geosyntec to support its compliance monitoring efforts and produces periodic reports which are provided to the Division and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division.

Culture, Engagement, and Buy-In

Overall perception of the culture of the Division is positive. Staff are pleased with Division leadership and feel that they have the support of management. Staff commended the clear path of promotion within the Division with a strong approach to promote from within, as many of the current leaders within the Division started their careers as front-line personnel.

Regarding communications, any policy or procedural changes typically originate from the Payroll & Personnel Section, which ensures that policy changes are communicated to each Division employee at the same time. Within the Residential Collections and Commercial/Roll-Off/Grapppler Services Sections, communications with front-line staff occur on a daily basis through daily Tailgate meetings before the beginning of each shift. Within the Processing & Disposal Section, the Processing & Disposal Assistant Director conducts regular meetings with the Landfill and Transfer Station Superintendents to discuss operations and strategic planning. Landfill and Transfer Station Superintendent also have regularly scheduled meetings with staff they oversee. Within the Division as whole, Division administration and supervisors meet monthly to discuss topics such as safety, planning, and procedures.

Commendations, Implementation of Leading Practices, Accreditation, and other Recognition

The Division owns and operates the Seminole Road Landfill ("landfill"), one of few landfills owned and operated by a County government in the metro Atlanta area. The Landfill accepts municipal solid waste, yard debris, and construction and demolition materials from County residents and County licensed businesses. The Landfill also accepts recycling, and the County collects its own compost at the Landfill from recycled yard trimmings from residents. Residents can visit the Landfill to collect compost at no cost.

The landfill is also the first certified green energy producer for Georgia Power. Present at the Landfill is the Green Energy Facility, a first of its kind in Georgia when built in 2006, which captures and converts methane gas into electricity. The Green Energy Facility captures methane gas from the Landfill and recycles it into clean electricity which is classified as Green Energy by the state Environmental Protection Division and Federal Environmental Protection Agency. The Green Energy Facility generates enough clean energy to meet the needs of 3,000 homes annually, while removing annual greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 3,300 vehicles. The Green Energy Facility has also resulted in increased revenues for the County, as the County sells the electricity to Georgia Power.

The County has since expanded the use of the energy produced by the Green Energy Facility by building a processing plant at the Landfill in 2012 known as the Renewable Fuels Facility. It was the first facility in the United States to have a fueling station on-site and generate electricity, renewable natural gas, and renewable compressed natural gas from landfill gas at one location. Renewable compressed natural gas is produced and sent to the fueling station where it is used by the County's sanitation vehicles and by the public. The excess renewable compressed natural gas is injected into the Atlanta Gas Light natural gas pipeline to other fueling stations. A majority of the Division's sanitation fleet currently runs on compressed natural gas with the goal of adapting their entire fleet to run on natural gas over the next few years. The Renewable Fuels Facility has resulted in a cost-savings for the County due to switching from previously diesel-powered vehicles and ensuring low fuel costs for the County.

The Division provides in-house commercial driver's license ("CDL") training for recruits who are hired without a CDL. Also, the Division provides in-house "plan ahead, analyze the surroundings, communicate with others, execute safe driving" ("PACE") training which consists of a defensive driving course to all new hires to help drivers identify at-risk behaviors and take action to eliminate them. Other in-house trainings provided include automatic side loader safety training, high-risk training for drivers with multiple accidents, roll-off and commercial front-load, commercial grapples, and tractor trailer training. Select Safety Officers within the Division are CDL and PACE certified to train new hires. The Division provides an extensive training program which allows select drivers and crew members to observe routes which they will be responsible for performing multiple times prior to actually driving and performing the routes in the field. Also, the Division maintains driving courses for employees to practice.

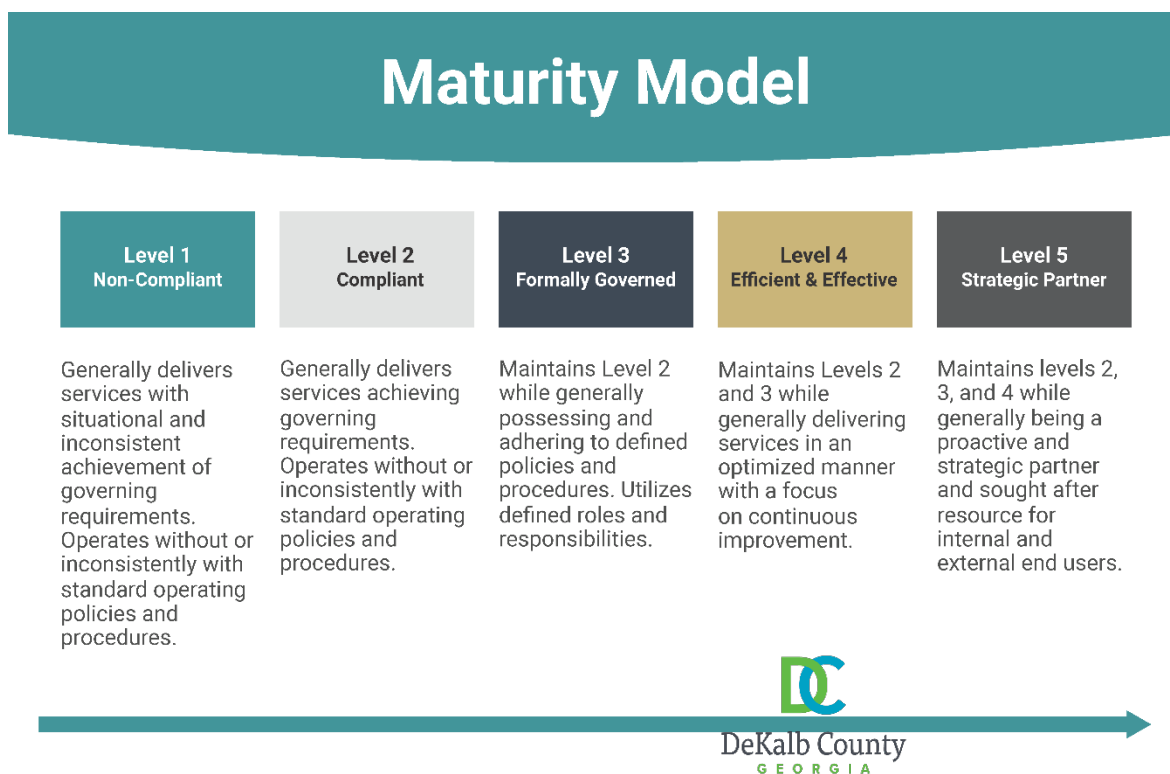
The Division is committed to taking proactive and preventative measures to emphasize the need for safe driving practices and identify efforts and resources needed. Measures taken to prevent accidents include the implementation of daily mandatory Tailgate safety meetings to educate drivers on common accidents and how to prevent such accidents. Also, the Division has implemented mandatory weekly general safety meetings which focus on a specific safety topic each week and identify best practices to follow. The Division also implemented a Top Gun Safety Challenge ("safety challenge") to incentivize employees to focus on safety and to significantly reduce all preventable accidents and incidents. The safety challenge awards a winning lot each quarter which is determined by the least number of preventable accidents for the quarter. The winning lot is presented with the Top Gun Trophy of Excellence and receives a cookout with a raffle for door prizes.

Furthermore, the Division maintains a disciplinary points system which tracks the number of, and types of accidents associated with drivers and assigns point values based on accident type and severity. If a driver reaches a threshold of points within a 36-month period, the driver is required to receive a refresher training to prevent additional accidents. A larger accumulation of points can also result in termination. The Division tracks driver accident and injury history in electronic employee files. The Division utilizes accident data to identify the most common types of accidents and target training to topics that address the most common accident types.

In an effort to monitor drivers, the Division performs weekly observations on driver's routes to identify unsafe driving practices. The Division tracks a wide range of preventable accident criteria during observations of drivers to inform training and education efforts and identify where additional training may be necessary. To improve and increase monitoring efforts, the Division is in the process of implementing Samsara, a technology solution which includes artificial intelligence to help detect safety events and record dashcam video including front and rear-facing cameras.

Departmental Maturity Assessment

M&J has developed a Maturity Model to help governments visualize a department's maturity and opportunities for growth and development. A department is graded into one of five levels, with each level indicating maturity and effective operations. While units at higher levels of the Maturity Model often perform more efficiently than units at lower Maturity Model levels, the Maturity Model is an evaluation of organizational maturity and does not directly measure unit performance. While the Maturity Model does not directly measure unit performance, organizational maturity has a strong impact on performance. Furthermore, organizational maturity tends to be a robust, long-lasting determinant of performance, allowing units with higher levels of organizational maturity to continue to function effectively through staff turnover, reorganization, major process changes, or other circumstances that may seriously disrupt the operations of units with lower levels of organizational maturity.



M&J evaluates the current organizational maturity of the Division as Level 4: Efficient & Effective.

While the Division is operating efficiently in many ways, the Division could implement a number of initiatives to be more strategic related to retention and recruitment, staffing levels, equipment, and safety.

Department Recommendations

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: The Finance Section was initially created and filled in 2024 and was initially intended to include a Billing Analyst, Billing Specialist, and a Delinquent Collections Officer. Based on M&J's fieldwork, the Billing Analyst, Billing Specialist, and Delinquent Collections Officer positions currently report directly to the Director. The positions are responsible for financial duties related to processing sanitation service billing and payments, assisting customers with inquiries regarding billing and payments, and tracking outstanding bills and managing delinquent payments.

Recommendation 1: To remove the Director from current oversight duties, the Billing Analyst, Billing Specialist, and Delinquent Collections Officer positions that currently report directly to the Director should be moved to the Finance Section and therefore report to the Senior Fiscal Officer.

Observation 2: Steps taken to improve residential and commercial customer services through solid waste collection include the planned implementation of Rubicon, a software solution that helps to optimize sanitation routes for more efficient services. Also, the Division is in the process of implementing Samsara, a technology solution which includes artificial intelligence to help detect safety events and record dashcam video including front and rear-facing cameras.

Recommendation 2: The Division is in the process of implementing additional technology to help optimize driver routes and use artificial intelligence to automatically detect safety incidents and to monitor driving practices using front and rear-facing cameras. The Division should continue its efforts to implement the Rubicon and Samsara software solutions to ensure route optimization and efficiency and to expand its monitoring capabilities for drivers.

Observation 3: Staff have expressed concerns with the safety of automatic side loader units. Due to the arm being on the passenger side and the driver having a half-seat where the driver cannot fully sit down, the vision on the driver's side is limited because the driver cannot fully sit down, which creates a blind spot.

Recommendation 3: The Division should create a plan to replace/retrofit existing automatic side loader units with automatic side loader units that allow the driver to fully sit down to eliminate current blind spots. Replacing such vehicles will help reduce the opportunity for accidents and injuries.

Observation 4: The Division must maintain a robust maintenance plan and be proactive with maintenance as a majority of sanitation equipment is older and therefore requires additional maintenance.

Recommendation 4: In an effort to increase efficiency and reduce long-term maintenance costs, the Division should work with Fleet Management create a plan to replace outdated vehicles in the future.

Observation 5: Sections related to residential and commercial services suffer from the highest turnover rates. Staff expressed concerns related to the length of the hiring process being cumbersome and therefore, providing applicants with time to find competing jobs. Staff also expressed concerns related to wages not being competitive with the private sector. As the Division provides in-house training to obtain a commercial driver's license in addition to other specialized training, the Division suffers from recruits obtaining specialized training and then fleeing to the private sector to obtain higher pay. Due to the lack of a pay incentive for experienced drivers (with commercial driver's licenses), the Division struggles to obtain experienced drivers.

Recommendation 5a: The County should work with the selected vendor for the Classification and Compensation Study to consider benchmarking Residential Collections and Commercial/Roll-Off/Grapppler Services positions against comparable private sector positions. This broadened benchmarking will provide the County with additional market industry, and may allow the Department to enhance its marketing to and targeting of workers, as well as consider compensation and incentive structures more competitive with the broader market for these employees.

Recommendation 5b: The Division should consider implementing incentives such as hiring bonuses to recruits that already possess a CDL and other certifications or specialized driver training.

Observation 6: The Division struggles with staffing levels and does not have an adequate number of allocated positions within its East lot.

Recommendation 6: The Division should assess staffing levels within each of the Division's four lots for residential and commercial collections and determine whether current staffing levels are adequate for workloads and service areas specific to each lot. The Division could consider reallocating existing positions to understaffed lots or requesting additional positions.

Observation 7: To help mitigate turnover rates specifically within its North lot, the Division runs a shuttle bus where employees who live closest to the Central and East lot areas of the County are transported to the North lot and brought back to the Central and East lots at the end of their shift. The Division also started a retention plan within the North lot to gain feedback from North lot employees in an effort to help new hires assigned to the North lot acclimate easier.

Recommendation 7: In an effort to increase retention, the Division should consider implementing shuttles and retention plans similar to those for the North lot, within remaining lots.

Observation 8: The Division is currently working towards an entire fleet that operates on compressed natural gas.

Recommendation 8: The Division should continue its efforts to adapt its current and newly acquired fleet vehicles to run on compressed natural gas.

Observation 9: M&J received approximately 48 SOPs on unique topics, with about one-third of SOPs last updated in 2023 or 2024. M&J is unsure of when the remaining two-thirds of SOPs were last updated to reflect actual practices.

Recommendation 9: The Division should consider conducting a review of SOPs that have not been updated since 2023 to ensure SOPs are up to date with actual practices. The Department should prioritize updating the most outdated policies first. As part of the review, a “last reviewed” date should be added to specific sections or content within SOPs to document the fact that the content was reviewed and whether any updates or changes were needed. Going forward, the Division should review SOPs annually to ensure accuracy. Ensuring SOPs are up to date will help to promote consistency in policy and practices.

Observation 10: In November 2024, the DeKalb County Office of Independent Internal Audit (“Audit”) issued a Final Report related to an Audit of Recycling Processes within the Department. Findings of the Audit included a 38% contamination rate from July to September 2024 in recycling material collected by the County from residential and commercial customers. The Audit also included a finding related to opportunities to further strengthen County residents’ awareness of recycling requirements and best practices.

Recommendation 10: The Department should continue to work towards implementing recommendations and management action plans to address all findings contained in the Audit.

Observation 11: The Administrative Services Section tracks monthly calls answered, lobby visitors for both residential and commercial, roll-off container requests fulfilled, and applications received for new residential services, garbage roll carts, and recycling roll carts. As such, the Division tracks performance metrics related to the Division’s goal of providing excellent customer service.

Recommendation 11: The Department has the potential to enhance existing performance measures for the Administrative Services Section through converting metrics to key performance indicators that are tied to strategic goals and objectives such as the average time to process applications and fulfill requests and the most common types of calls/issues/questions received through the Call Center.

Conclusion

The Sanitation Department is operating efficiently and effective in many ways and appears to have a positive culture and bond among its workers. Department morale appears to be high, and employees consistently noted that they feel valued by the Department and the County. The Department has implemented multiple leading practices such as the construction and operation of its Green Energy Facility and Renewable Fuels Facility.

The Department will benefit from its planned technology upgrades for its loaders (dashboard cameras and optimized route planning) creating a safer and more efficient environment for the employees and community. The Department struggles with losing staff to the private sector, and the Department and County leadership should continue to identify methods

We are confident that with current Department efforts, as well as the recommendations contained in this report, that the Sanitation Department will continue to be a necessary and appreciated asset within the community. We would like to thank Department leadership for their time and resources, and for allowing us to conduct interviews with 13 individuals across levels of the Department, perform job shadowing of certain functions, and tour facilities.

Enterprise-wide Observations and Recommendations

During M&J's fieldwork, we identified multiple observations that either have enterprise-wide impact throughout the County government or will require policy or guidance from County leadership. Below are the noted enterprise-wide observations and recommendations.

Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the following recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

Observation 1: Culturally, DeKalb alternates between a control-oriented and a performance-oriented environment. Employees in nearly all of the in-scope departments identify that DeKalb's customers – whether residents, businesses, stakeholders, or those passing through, are the most important mission. Staff feel limited however, due to a number of varying reasons, as outlined in the Departmental assessments. These two primary limiting factors: perceived inadequate pay and benefits; and feelings of mistrust, lack of respect, and underappreciation.

Recommendation 1: County leadership should assess meaningful ways to demonstrate to staff that individuals at all levels are seen and appreciated, and should ensure consistent and meaningful communications about the upcoming Classification and Compensation Study. Where applicable, individual departmental recommendations about restructuring job titles or classifications, adding in additional tiers or levels to allow for growth, and assessing workflows for promotion and recognition should all be considered.

Observation 2a: Job descriptions created by the Department are generally vague and not tailored to County department's needs. As a result, job descriptions do not consistently describe actual job responsibilities. The most recent classification and compensation study was conducted in 2016.

Observation 2b: Job titling is not appropriate for certain roles within departments and therefore, staff feel that their job titles and salaries are not adequate for their actual roles and responsibilities.

Observation 2c: County staff feel that there is an inconsistent application of pay scales. More specifically, staff expressed that experienced staff receive limited pay raises, while new hires with less experience may receive higher salaries than staff who have tenure with the County. Staff feel that due to discrepancies in HR's understanding of how experience is comparable and qualified, pay scales are implemented inconsistently.

Recommendation 2: The HR Department should continue its efforts to conduct a classification and compensation study. The HR Department should ensure that an evaluation of job descriptions compared to actual roles and responsibilities is performed as part of the study. The HR Department should also ensure that once pay scales are assessed and potentially adjusted, the HR Department applies and implements pay scales consistently to existing employees and future new hires.

Observation 3: Numerous County departments lack consistent buy-in from staff, as well as change management champions, for the decision-making process for policy changes, new resource selection, and identification of solutions to issues raised by personnel. The DeKalb County Fire Rescue Department has addressed decision-making buy-in through the implementation of *ad hoc* workgroups comprised of staff with different title levels in different functional areas who research and present solutions to executive staff. The workgroups increase transparency into the decision-making process and allow for a greater range of perspectives.

Recommendation 3: County leadership should encourage departments to implement workgroups, using those established by the Fire Rescue Department as a template, to increase transparency and buy-in for the decision-making process for policy changes, new resources selection, and identification of solutions to issues raised by personnel. County leadership could additionally consider County-wide workgroups comprised of staff from multiple departments to address inter-departmental processes and enterprise-wide issues that affect multiple County functions.

Observation 4: Compensatory time represents time which an employee who is exempt from overtime works additional hours (typically over 40 hours) and can use the additional time worked at a later date of their choosing to take time off. As such, compensatory time differs from overtime and from paid time-off. Compensatory time is tracked by employees and supervisors within Excel but is not tracked formally within the County's timekeeping or payroll systems.

Recommendation 4: The HR Department should establish, and document clear procedures related to compensatory time accrual and the tracking of compensatory time to ensure the time is being earned, tracked, and used consistently by all department divisions and units. The HR Department should establish a formal system for tracking compensatory time and should create a formal policy surrounding on-call time which may be compensated using compensatory time to ensure consistency.

Observation 5: Based on numerous department interviews, it was communicated that employees with alternative schedules (such as 4-day workweeks with 10 hours per day) do not consistently have the whole day coded as a holiday and are asked to use paid time-off to account for the difference between the 8 hours of holiday time and the extra hours typically worked during the alternative schedule. As an example, staff who work 4-day workweeks with 10 hours per day, report only receiving eight hours of holiday pay as opposed to the 10 hours that the employee typically works. In order to receive their full pay for holidays, employees report having to use two hours of paid time-off.

Recommendation 5: The HR Department should assess policies surrounding alternate work schedules and holiday pay and should consider allowing employees with alternate schedules to receive holiday pay hours commensurate to their full workday's worth of pay on holidays that fall on workdays of alternate-schedule employees.

Observation 6: County departments expressed concerns regarding managerial training material being overly generic and not adequately situational or applicable dependent on County departments' work environment. Furthermore, customer service training has been described as not meeting end-user department's needs.

Recommendation 6: The HR Department should assess training offerings and material to ensure the Department's training function is robust and is able to be tailored by HR or the County departments to ensure maximum effectiveness. When creating managerial training, the HR Department should take into consideration different managerial environments within County departments.

Observation 7: The County's Bright Future Leadership Development Program ("BFLDP"), has been successful in the past and is in the process of being reconfigured to ensure relevance in the changing workforce.

Recommendation 7: The County should continue its efforts to successfully provide the Bright Future Leadership Development Program ("BFLDP"), to employees based on leadership's evaluation of potential and employee performance. BFLDP should provide attendees with more knowledge of countywide operations and initiatives, equip attendees with executive level skills, and help to create a future pipeline for leadership within the County.

Observation 8: There are inconsistencies related to certification and training processes within County departments. Training and certification functions appear to be driven by individual departments regarding which courses can be taken and paid for as departments must decide how much of their budgets to allocate for training purposes. As observed within the HR Department, not all County departments are currently participating in programs such as the tuition reimbursement program. Therefore, there are inconsistencies regarding which training opportunities are available to County departments.

Recommendation 8: The HR Department should create a County-wide policy or procedure to address training needs of all County departments and ensure that training needs are fulfilled consistently. Furthermore, the HR Department should implement policies or procedures which require departments to participate in tuition reimbursement to ensure all County employees are allowed the same opportunities. The County and the HR Department should also consider any budget related to tuition reimbursement be centralized within the HR Department as opposed to residing at the department level where the funds may be used for other purposes.

Observation 9: Related to the performance appraisal process, staff expressed desires for a 360 evaluation process in which staff can assess team members such as peers and direct managers/supervisors.

Recommendation 9: The HR Department should consider implementing an anonymous survey process in which staff members can provide performance reviews or feedback for peers and direct managers/supervisors as part of a 360 performance evaluation process. The HR Department could implement a 360-Degree Feedback Survey which allows for feedback to be anonymous or could integrate a 360 evaluation process into the existing performance evaluation processes.

Observation 10: Staff noted communication issues and delays related to onboarding processes such as requesting and obtaining equipment as initial processes with HR and the County Department of Innovation & Technology are decentralized and are the responsibility of individual departments to request.

Recommendation 10: The HR Department should assess current onboarding request processes and should collaborate with the County Department of Innovation & Technology to serve as the centralized source for onboarding procedures such as processing requests for equipment for new hires. As such, there should be a process in place which notifies both the HR Department and the County Department of Innovation & Technology to coordinate to provide new hires with proper equipment for performing job duties.

Observation 11: End-user department staff feel that they are not receiving the most qualified applicants for job postings within their departments due to filtering or screening of applicants by HR prior to passing them onto the departments. As such, departments feel that it would be beneficial to receive access to the entire applicant pool to ensure qualified candidates are not screened out.

Recommendation 11: The HR Department should allow departments who request access to the entire applicant pool to have access to ensure qualified applicants are being presented to departments. A more immediate step is to have end-user departments better educate the HR Recruiting employees on the specific qualifications, skills, and desired experience of candidates to consistently provide more efficient candidate screenings.

Observation 12: The Chief Operating Officer (“COO”) is too involved in daily decision-making throughout the County, which can lead to inefficiencies and lack of timely response based on workload. As the COO must regularly function at a tactical, instead of strategic level, there may be less strategic analytics and decision-making at the County-level.

Recommendation 12: The County should leverage Deputy Chief Operating Officer positions to reduce the operational workload of the COO, to allow the position to serve in a more strategic capacity. Deputy COOs should be assigned functional areas that align with either the CEO’s strategic priorities, or potentially leverage the four functional groups currently in use by the COO’s Office.

Observation 13: The County’s grants management and decision-making about grant opportunities is decentralized, which may result in grants and activities that do not align with County leadership’s priorities, or grant awards that require post-award maintenance of costs, programs, or positions that may not be the most effective use of County funds.

Recommendation 13: The County should consider a Grants Strategy position in the CEO Office and/or COO’s office, to assist in overseeing an enterprise-wide strategy and helping determine which opportunities are best suited for the County and which may be a better fit for community partners who can apply for grants with the County’s support.

Observation 14: Currently, the smaller departments (DEMA, E911, and Animal Enforcement Services) that report to the Public Safety Director lack internal administrative support, leveraging either the Police Department, Fire Rescue Department, or some combination of the two for supporting their HR, payroll, financial, and purchasing needs. Staff in these departments report frustration in trying to ensure consistency with external department requirements and procedures, and also report a feeling that their workload is less important than the workload of the administrative employee’s home department.

Recommendation 14: The County should assess whether one to two administration positions should be created under the Public Safety Director to provide administrative support to these smaller departments. If these positions are approved, the Public Safety Director would need to establish standard operating procedures for these administrative functions, and communicate those procedures and expectations to the end-user departments.

Observation 15: M&J did not evaluate the Utility Customer Operations Division of Finance within the scope of this assessment.

Recommendation 15: The County should assess Utility Customer Operations and the Department of Watershed Management in an upcoming operational assessment, to better understand the roles of the employees within the two departments, including the dependencies, handoffs, and organizational and governance structures.

Observation 16: The Department of Community Development was not within the scope of this Initial Assessment. Through the assessment of DeKalb 311, M&J noted some potential communication challenges with the implementation of the ICCI program.

Recommendation 16: The County may want to consider an additional phase of assessment focused on wrap-around community services, such as those in Community Development, Human Services and WorkSource DeKalb, to more comprehensively the resources available to DeKalb residents, and the accessibility of those resources and effectiveness in meeting the comprehensive needs of residents.

Observation 17: The County maintains a selection of intergovernmental agreements with local municipalities, as well as files a Service Delivery Strategy document with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The documents do not consistently provide clarity as to the role of County departments within each municipality and do not delineate the roles, responsibilities, and procedures required of each political subdivision as part of the various services delivered (*e.g.*, law enforcement, plan review, animal control, etc.).

Recommendation 17: The county should consider reviewing and revising the intergovernmental agreements with local municipalities, as well as establishing new intergovernmental agreements, that provide clarity on the role of each political subdivision in the delivery of services. The agreements should delineate when County resources are utilized, when municipal resources are utilized, and when overlap may be requested or required. The County should consider additional documentation that is less binding than an intergovernmental agreement that clarifies specific inter-jurisdictional processes to align the understanding and efforts of the County and its municipalities. The County should further consider regular reviews of the intergovernmental agreements to ensure the agreements reflect changes in services provided by each political subdivision.

4. Conclusion

The in-scope departments are operating efficiently in many ways, but also have many opportunities to enhance operations, service delivery, customer service, and accountability. The new CEO has already begun making positive change and investment early in her tenure by enhancing pay scale and recruiting efforts in public safety, and commencing the process for a countywide Classification and Compensation study to assess alignment of County employees' job titling, roles and responsibilities, and pay to market conditions. Both efforts will go a long way to further recruiting and retention efforts of employees.

As shown in this report, the County should focus on the following broad themes:

- Drive consistency and standardization within County departments and across the organization
- Assess and remedy issues with the County's recent implementation of CV360 to ensure process automation as well as to optimize the County's investment in the technology
- Plan and invest in facility/infrastructure needs
- Enhance the centralization of services to enable more enterprise-wide strategies as opposed to department-specific strategies
- Enhance the use of Key performance Indicators and data analysis focusing more on outcomes as opposed to activities for enhanced data points for decision-making
- Continue to invest in the County's greatest asset, its employees, by enhancing performance management and training programs

The County now has a more thorough understanding of the operations of the in-scope departments, recommendations on how to improve County services and operations within those departments, and a strategic roadmap for approaching the implementation of those recommendations. Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine which, if any, of the included recommendations are to be implemented and the timing of such implementation.

We commend the CEO of DeKalb County for commencing this Assessment as this process has been in-depth, given employees across numerous departments an opportunity to participate in the process and the process has brought to light the positive accomplishments of the in-scope departments, and the opportunities for improvement needed to achieve operational excellence.

5. Strategic Roadmap

The following pages detail the 266 recommendations for the in-scope departments. The recommendations are categorized by applicable owner (enterprise-wide or single department), are assigned a prioritization level for implementation, and include a typical timeframe for implementation and estimated potential financial impact. The detailed report should be read in its entirety to better understand the context for the identified observations and recommendations. Management has the ultimate responsibility to determine the prioritization level and timeline for implementation of any of the recommendations in this report.

The County should dedicate resources and engage external specialists where needed to assist with implementation.

Department	Recommendation	Priority/ Sense of Urgency: 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	Suggested Timeline for Implementation: 1 = <90 days 2 = 91-180 days 3 = 180+ days	Estimated Potential Financial Impact: 1 = Sustained 2 = One-time 3 = None
DeKalb 311 Help Desk	If the County desires DeKalb 311 to be a value-add, one-stop shop for initial service and support to residents, DeKalb 311 needs to be expanded to meet those needs. DeKalb 311 should have a more dedicated and comprehensive web presence, providing quick links and access to on-demand ticket submission when it is convenient for the resident. Some common examples include: probation contacts, how and when to appear in court, missed sanitation pickups, bulk sanitation pickups, business license renewal, reporting road issues, and reporting water line breaks or leaks. The County could also consider adding more self-service options, to ensure that CCR's time is value-add for the caller. DeKalb County should assess if the Oracle system currently in-use for call-taking (or an alternative, such as expanding the COO Tracker) would allow for residents to directly report issues, submit pictures and track resolution efforts. DeKalb 311 could also coordinate with DOIT to assess if chatbots could also provide on-demand assistance. CCRs could also be leveraged to provide in-person support to residents who are not technologically savvy, especially in navigating online processes such as business license renewal. DeKalb 311 could position a staff at Planning & Sustainability or at the Maloof Center to provide real-time, hands-on support during the business license renewal process. If DeKalb 311 is not determined to be of value as a tool for additional support and resource navigation, a more robust IVR system and more user-friendly website access could assist in navigating callers to the desired end-user department, assuming callers know who they need to contact. County departments would need to have their customer-facing staffing levels assessed, with the potential for current CCRs to be positioned in these departments as dedicated customer support assistance.	2	3	1

Department	Recommendation	Priority/ Sense of Urgency: 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	Suggested Timeline for Implementation: 1 = <90 days 2 = 91-180 days 3 = 180+ days	Estimated Potential Financial Impact: 1 = Sustained 2 = One-time 3 = None
DeKalb 311 Help Desk	Community Development was not within the M&J scope for this project, so M&J cannot assess the systems or tracking mechanisms in place for the organizations that are directing funding to eligible residents. DeKalb 311 should work with Community Development to create a communication procedure for DeKalb 311 to report issues, concerns with communication and information dissemination, or address questions that they may be regularly receiving from callers.	3	1	3
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should work with the HR Department to appropriately classify each of the three positions with supervision over field operations. The Department should additionally clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each position (even if through an internal job description, rather than a formal, County description) to clearly delineate the division of duties and provide clarity as to chain of command for field personnel.	1	1	3
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should consider working with the HR Department to add a Senior Animal Control Dispatcher classification and/or Lead Animal Control Dispatcher classification to account for increases in responsibility and certification required of longer tenured Animal Control Dispatchers.	2	2	1
Animal Enforcement Services	The County should consider identifying training facilities available to the entire County government that are available to departments, such as Animal Enforcement Services, that have limited to no training facilities available.	1	1	3
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should identify a new methodology or confirm the current methodology for designating Field Training Officers as part of the update to the Standard Operating Procedures. The Department should provide adequate instruction to Field Training Officers and could consider incentivizing field personnel who agree to serve in the Field Training Officer capacity. The Field Training Officer designation should be regularly reviewed to ensure designated Officers are providing the level of training and oversight necessary for new recruits.	3	3	3

Department	Recommendation	Priority/ Sense of Urgency: 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	Suggested Timeline for Implementation: 1 = <90 days 2 = 91-180 days 3 = 180+ days	Estimated Potential Financial Impact: 1 = Sustained 2 = One-time 3 = None
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should work with leadership in the E-911 Emergency Communication Center to ensure that E-911 dispatchers are trained to provide the necessary information to Animal Control Officers dispatched to incident response outside the hours worked by Animal Enforcement Services Dispatchers. Department leadership should consider communicating when field personnel voice concerns regarding limited accessibility to dispatchers to E-911 Emergency Communication Center leadership to ensure both dispatchers and Animal Control Officers are aligned on expectations of radio response times and priority of radio responses.	2	2	3
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department could consider introducing shifts for Animal Control Dispatchers, as the Department continues to fill Officer positions and the Department's call volume increases, to more fully provide radio coverage by Department staff whenever Animal Control Officers are in the field. To transition to a shift-based model, the Department would need to consider hiring additional Dispatchers and an additional supervisory or lead position.	2	3	1
Animal Enforcement Services	The Public Safety Department should institute uniform guidance for radio communication and ensure that all public safety functions (including those functions related to public safety but not included in the Public Safety Department, such as Code Compliance) utilize the same method of communication – either ten-codes or plain speech.	1	1	3
Animal Enforcement Services	The County should consider reviewing and revising the intergovernmental agreements with local municipalities, as well as establishing new intergovernmental agreements, that provide clarity on the role of DeKalb County Animal Enforcement Services within each municipal jurisdiction. The agreements should clarify the role of DeKalb County Animal Enforcement Services and local municipal departments (including animal control, code enforcement/compliance, and law enforcement departments) in the processes and procedures involved in animal control, enforcement, and welfare (such as citation issuance, investigations, and case follow-up).	3	3	3

Department	Recommendation	Priority/ Sense of Urgency: 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	Suggested Timeline for Implementation: 1 = <90 days 2 = 91-180 days 3 = 180+ days	Estimated Potential Financial Impact: 1 = Sustained 2 = One-time 3 = None
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should purchase portable citation printers that can connect to the Animal Control Officers' laptops, tablets, or other portable devices for more efficient citation issuance. The Department could consider reviewing the printers used by the DeKalb County Code Compliance Administration as a possible option for Animal Enforcement Services.	1	1	2
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should consider establishing one to two special operations roles that specialize in severe cases and maintain Peace Officer Standards and Training certification. The Department could consider a Cruelty and Neglect Officer position and/or a Bite Officer position to specialize in those specific incidents and oversee the cases throughout the lifecycle of the investigation (even if the respective Officer isn't the initial responding Officer for the incident). The positions could be classified as separate positions or could be classified as Master Animal Control Officer positions with a separate functional job description and title, as well as a pay incentive compensating the positions for additional responsibilities.	2	3	1
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should coordinate with Fleet Maintenance to ensure new vehicle needs are identified when new positions are requested and/or approved. The Department should further coordinate with Fleet Maintenance and the Office of Management and Budget to ensure that the Department is reserving funds on an annual basis to cover the costs of new and replacement vehicles. The Department should consider an annual meeting with Fleet Maintenance to understand which vehicles are eligible for the Vehicle Replacement Program to assist AES with budget planning for new vehicles and/or other budget requests.	2	3	3
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should purchase hands-free technology for vehicles, such as phone mounts, and wireless backup cameras to place on the back of the vehicles.	1	1	2

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Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should require daily inspections by field personnel of their assigned vehicles at the start and end of their shift, as part of an update to the Standard Operating Procedures. The Department could consider providing the Officers with a standardized checklist, either in paper or digital form, that has to be completed prior to leaving the Department's facility. The Department could further consider working with the Department of Innovation and Technology to identify an app that allows Officers to digitally complete a vehicle inspection, which would automatically notify the Department of any supplies or equipment that need to be reordered and/or notify Fleet Maintenance of mechanical issues with vehicles.	3	3	3
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should consider revising the on-call schedule to increase the length of on-call shifts, which, combined with the increase in number of field personnel, would decrease the frequency of Officers' on-call assignments. The Department should further consider compensating field personnel for their on-call shifts, regardless of incident responses. The Department could consider compensating field personnel for two hours automatically, as well as the time spent responding to calls.	2	2	1
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should consider working with the Department of Innovation and Technology to identify a new case and records management system that the DeKalb County government can own the license to and administer. The Department should consider a system that integrates with the County's CAD system and can track field personnel's daily activities without the need for a handwritten duty log. The Department could consider piggybacking off of the records management system utilized by the Police Department to better integrate the County's public safety services.	1	3	1

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Animal Enforcement Services	The County should consider investing in a new facility for Animal Enforcement Services that meets the needs of the Department (e.g., parking for both employees and Department vehicles; appropriate space for the containment of animals, if necessary; a training room separate from the breakroom; etc.) The County should evaluate the pattern of calls that Officers respond to, and locate the Department in a location that best situates the Department to respond to incidents, rather than just combining the Department with the shelter facility.	1	3	1
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should conduct a comprehensive refresh of the Standard Operating Procedures Manual. The updates should largely remove references to the Police Department and that department's employee manual, except in the instances Animal Enforcement Services still utilizes Police Department resources. The Animal Enforcement Services Standard Operating Procedures should be able to stand as an independent set of policies and procedures specific to the Department.	2	3	3
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should consider providing each employee a copy of the Standard Operating Procedures Manual, in print and/or digital format, and require employees to sign a form acknowledging that they have read and understand the Standard Operating Procedures. When policies or procedures are introduced or updated, the Department should consider requiring employees to sign a form acknowledging the change. The Department could consider a resource such as Vector Solutions, which is utilized by the DeKalb County Fire Rescue Department, as a tool to publish the Manual and track acknowledgement of the Manual and changes to policy, as well as track employee's training and certifications.	2	2	3

Department	Recommendation	Priority/ Sense of Urgency: 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	Suggested Timeline for Implementation: 1 = <90 days 2 = 91-180 days 3 = 180+ days	Estimated Potential Financial Impact: 1 = Sustained 2 = One-time 3 = None
Animal Enforcement Services	The Department should identify additional measures that include inputs, outputs, and performance indicators (such as how many actions taken by field personnel have resulted in compliance or where calls are located within the County). The Department should then track the identified measures against established standards and use the data to monitor the Department's performance, evaluate progress toward goals and strategic priorities, and support future improvements to the Department's service delivery methods (such as schedule structure and identification of patrol zones).	1	1	3
Code Compliance	The County should consider moving the Code Compliance Administration into the Public Safety Department, with the head of CCA (either the current Deputy Director position or the vacant Director position, when filled) reporting to the Public Safety Director. Officers should be recognized as public safety personnel and receive similar resources, as appropriate, as other public safety employees.	2	3	1
Code Compliance	The Department should utilize the CAD system for Officer dispatch, with Administrative Assistants (or any future personnel assigned dispatch duties for the Department) conducting radio safety checks of on-scene Officers approximately every 15 minutes. The Department should have the same access to incident response logs as any other County function that responds to private residences and businesses.	2	3	2
Code Compliance	The Department should purchase and issue personal protective equipment to field personnel, including tactical vests, body cameras, and high-powered flashlights, for use during on-scene inspections. The Department can prioritize the timeline for issuance of equipment based on the types and locations of inspections, but should develop a plan for Department-wide issuance.	2	3	1

Department	Recommendation	Priority/ Sense of Urgency: 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	Suggested Timeline for Implementation: 1 = <90 days 2 = 91-180 days 3 = 180+ days	Estimated Potential Financial Impact: 1 = Sustained 2 = One-time 3 = None
Code Compliance	The Department should consider establishing one or more positions dedicated to training. The position(s) should develop a standardized training curriculum for new employees (both field operations and administrative) that encompasses the current process of book-based training, computer-based training, and field-based training. As the Department settles into a routine for new employee training, training staff could begin to serve in a secondary public education role.	3	3	1
Code Compliance	The Department should identify a new methodology or confirm the current methodology for designating Field Training Officers. The Department should provide adequate instruction to Field Training Officers and could consider incentivizing field personnel who agree to serve in the Field Training Officer capacity. The Field Training Officer designation should be regularly reviewed to ensure designated Officers are providing the level of training and oversight necessary for new employees.	3	3	3
Code Compliance	The Department should develop a standardized training calendar for its employees, ensuring that all employees are scheduled for training and certifications required by Department policy. The Department should consider developing an ongoing continuing education schedule for all employees to maintain certifications, achieve additional certifications (especially those required for advancement), and continue developing technical and soft skills related to code compliance and enforcement.	2	2	3
Code Compliance	The Department should begin paying upfront for employee's training and certifications, rather than requiring employees to request retroactive reimbursement. In instances where employees require multiple sittings of exams to achieve certification, the Department could consider a policy of funding the first sitting, but require employees to partially or completely fund subsequent sittings.	2	2	2

Department	Recommendation	Priority/ Sense of Urgency: 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	Suggested Timeline for Implementation: 1 = <90 days 2 = 91-180 days 3 = 180+ days	Estimated Potential Financial Impact: 1 = Sustained 2 = One-time 3 = None
Code Compliance	The Department should develop, publish, and codify in the Employee Manual a standardized policy for promotion of field personnel. The policy should clearly identify the years of service and certifications required for eligibility to promote, as well as methods for communicating the availability of promotional opportunities to all eligible staff, and the Department should adhere to the policy consistently for each promotional opportunity.	3	3	3
Code Compliance	The Department should consider working with the HR Department to add a Master Code Compliance Officer classification to account for increases in responsibility and certification required of longer tenured Senior Code Compliance Officers. The Department should further consider working with the HR Department to eliminate the restriction on the number of Senior Code Compliance Officer positions available and implement a system of promotional opportunities for individual employees, rather than an application-based system. The Department could consider a promotional pathway similar to the Police, Fire Rescue, or Animal Enforcement Services Departments in which a Code Compliance Officer who has been in their position for 24 months and has achieved a designated certification (such as Level II certification from the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement), has the opportunity to promote to Senior Code Compliance Officer, and receive an increase in salary grade. In this system, Senior Code Compliance Officers who have been in their position for 24 months and achieve the designated certification (such as Level III certification from the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement), would have the opportunity to promote to Master Code Compliance Officer, with the parallel increase in salary grade. In addition to time in position and certifications achieved, the Department could require performance evaluations as part of the promotional criteria.	2	2	2

Department	Recommendation	Priority/ Sense of Urgency: 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	Suggested Timeline for Implementation: 1 = <90 days 2 = 91-180 days 3 = 180+ days	Estimated Potential Financial Impact: 1 = Sustained 2 = One-time 3 = None
Code Compliance	The Department should review the overtime policy currently codified in its Employee Manual to determine if the policy comprehensively covers the various scenarios for employees who are required to work outside of their normal shifts. The Department should update the overtime policy as necessary and ensure that it is consistently applied to all employees.	3	2	3
Code Compliance	The Department should work with the HR Department to include information about the non-standard shifts available and/or required for employees in all relevant job descriptions, including the Code Compliance Officer job description, posted on the County's employment website.	3	2	3
Code Compliance	The Department should consider working with the HR Department to add a Senior Administrative Assistant classification (or similar more advanced classification) and/or Lead Administrative Assistant classification (or similar lead classification) to account for increases in responsibility and possibility of certification required of longer tenured Administrative Assistants. The Department should further consider working with the HR Department to ensure the Administrative Assistant classification is adequate for the duties and responsibilities required of the Administrative Support Team.	2	1	1
Code Compliance	The Department should develop a comprehensive technology and equipment purchase strategy that holistically reviews existing technology, software, hardware, and other equipment with prospective purchases to ensure current and prospective resources will integrate and improve, rather than eliminate, efficiencies.	3	3	3
Code Compliance	The Department should consider establishing a position dedicated to managing code compliance and enforcement activities at the DeKalb County Magistrate Court. The Department could also consider realigning duties and responsibilities of current positions to reassign management of court activities to an existent position without limiting the position's ability to invest time and attention to other responsibilities.	3	3	3

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Code Compliance	The County should consider reviewing the current fine schedule for property maintenance and zoning violations, including repeat violations, to ensure the level of fines assessed is in line with neighboring jurisdictions and provides property owners with adequate incentivization to address code violations.	2	2	3
Code Compliance	The Department should consider hosting regular meetings with County solicitors and the staff of the DeKalb County Magistrate Court to provide education on the importance of code enforcement and the recourses other than case dismissal available to property owners who have, or claim to have, limited means of addressing code violations.	3	3	3
Code Compliance	The Department should conduct a comprehensive review and subsequent update of its Employee Manual. The updates should largely remove references to the Police Department, except in the instances Code Compliance Administration still utilizes Police Department resources. The Code Compliance Administration Employee Manual should be able to stand as an independent set of policies and procedures specific to the Department, and should refer to the Department by a singular name.	3	2	3
Code Compliance	The Department should reincorporate the chapter on field operations into the Code Compliance Administration Employee Manual. The chapter should include standard operating procedures for conducting field operations. The Department could consider including in the chapter information on required certifications, promotional processes, and explanations of personal protective equipment available to Code Compliance Officers.	2	2	3
Code Compliance	The Department should be sure to not just append new and updated policies to the end of the Code Compliance Administration Employee Manual in memorandum form, but also make the necessary changes to the chapters and sections within the body of the Employee Manual affected by the policy memoranda.	3	2	3

Department	Recommendation	Priority/ Sense of Urgency: 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	Suggested Timeline for Implementation: 1 = <90 days 2 = 91-180 days 3 = 180+ days	Estimated Potential Financial Impact: 1 = Sustained 2 = One-time 3 = None
Code Compliance	The Department should consider implementing a quality assurance/quality control review process as part of its regular operations, either through realignment of duties and responsibilities for current positions or through the establishment of a new quality-dedicated position. The quality assurance/quality control function would most likely report to the Code Compliance Administrator based on the Department's current alignment of responsibilities.	2	3	3
Code Compliance	The Department should consider reviewing its identified performance measures to ensure each is meaningful and relevant for the decision-making process. The Department should begin to emphasize data-driven decisions in order to operate more strategically, efficiently, and effectively. The Department should review its annual objectives against each prior year's progress toward successful completion of the objectives, and adjust the objectives, as well as the performance standards contained within each objective, to appropriately measure the Department's ability to achieve performance priorities and strategic initiatives.	3	3	3
Code Compliance	The Department should consider a 360-degree-style training program for new Code Compliance Officer, in which each new field personnel serve for a period on a Residential Team, the Multi-family Team, and the Commercial Corridors Team. While M&J does not recommend rotations for experienced Officers, as specialization in single-family residential, multi-family residential, or commercial code enforcement provides a higher benefit to the Department, a brief rotation program for new Officers can provide insight into the operations and expectations of each field operations team.	2	3	2

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Code Compliance	Department leadership should make more of an effort to engage with staff across all levels and functional areas, ensuring more intentional engagement across all teams. Communication should include both formal Departmental announcements and meetings, as well as informal discussions between coworkers and non-work-oriented team building. Leadership could consider developing workgroups representing staff on each team to provide insight and cross-team discussion for Departmental planning and performance efforts, as well as discussing policy modifications.	2	1	3
Code Compliance	The Department should introduce a daily Roll Call for each of the team to allow supervisory positions (as well as any experienced Officers designated as Officers in Charge or Field Training Officers) to review prior activities; expected and anticipated activities; performance management; and changes to policies, processes, and resources. The Deputy Director, Code Compliance Administrator, and any future Departmental leadership positions should try to attend multiple Roll Calls per week, as available, rotating between the teams in order to provide visibility, accountability, and consistent understanding of Department decisions.	2	1	3
Code Compliance	County leadership should encourage meetings among leadership from the Code Compliance Administration and other DeKalb County Departments on at least an annual basis in order to communicate changes in policy and process and ensure departments remain aligned in terms of provision of services. Departments considered for regular meetings should include Police, Fire Rescue, Public Health, E-911 Emergency Communications Center, Animal Enforcement Services, Planning & Sustainability, and Sanitation. In addition to leadership meetings, the County should encourage inter-departmental training for the aforementioned departments on an annual basis, to allow for interaction, networking, and alignment of understanding among down-line employees of the various departments.	2	3	3

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Emergency Management	DEMA leadership should identify and define the essential functions of the office, and update the job descriptions and workload to ensure consistent and equitable distribution of workload and assignments. If the essential functions cannot be performed within the current management framework, DEMA should consider if workload can be assigned to the Emergency Management Specialists, or if additional positions, such as those focused on training exercises and/or volunteer management, are needed.	2	2	1
Emergency Management	The Emergency Management Director and Administrative Assistant should work with Human Resources to determine if the duties as performed should be modified to reflect the job description. If the Emergency Management Director desires the Administrative Assistant to serve in a capacity other than what is described in the job description, proper steps should be followed to determine if this position can be reclassified.	3	2	3
Emergency Management	DEMA should work with Human Resources to evaluate the creation of a Senior or Lead Emergency Management Specialist position.	2	2	1
Emergency Management	The County should formalize their relationship with ARES through an MOU that defines deployment of ARES personnel and equipment during emergency response activation.	3	3	3
Emergency Management	DEMA should ensure that all designated ESFs have received ICS 700 and ICS 800 training, at a minimum. Additional drills and exercises should be developed and implemented to ensure understanding of roles and responsibilities. DEMA may also want to consider getting one or more staff members certified as ICS trainers.	1	1	3
Emergency Management	DEMA should develop a three-to-five-year plan of trainings, workshops, drills, tabletops, and exercises that DEMA will coordinate and host. At a minimum, the plan should consider the results of prior exercises and drills, and should prioritize high significance risks identified in the LEOP and/or the HMP.	2	2	3

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Emergency Management	DEMA should coordinate with the rest of Public Safety to identify the funds to purchase or build drive under shelters or carports, to protect some of the specialty public safety vehicles currently parked at the Public Safety Headquarters.	2	3	2
Emergency Management	The County should invest in additional weather stations, either portable or stationary, to install at fire stations and police precincts throughout the County, to enhance the coverage area and allow for more accurate hazard analysis, which can aid in determining appropriate safety responses.	2	2	2
Emergency Management	DEMA should consider establishing a special needs or vulnerable populations registry within CodeRed, to allow for targeted messaging to vulnerable populations, to allow them a means of communication with DeKalb County around additional assistance or support in transport to shelters.	2	2	3
Emergency Management	M&J understands that DeKalb County is undertaking a Facilities Master Plan. DEMA should share FEMA guidance on Emergency Operations Centers, as well as industry practices related to centralized storage and distribution to determine if an existing or planned County building may meet some of these requests.	3	3	1
Emergency Management	DEMA should update the improvement plan procedures to ensure care is taken in assigning a designation period of action that is commensurate with the identified improvement's complexity and risk posed to actual EOC response and operations. DEMA should also establish a tracking mechanism, such as a SharePoint or other site that tracks all of the active improvement plans, the current status of individual elements, and identify any barriers to implementation. There should be regular review and evaluation of prior implementation plans to determine if actions taken have reduced the risk or improved the perceived weakness.	2	1	3

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Emergency Management	Once DEMA has established strategic planning priorities and key functions, it needs to establish the standard operating procedures associated with the complete implementation of key functions and priorities. These documents should set clear expectations about chain of command, protocols of operations, and specific steps to take to mitigate risk to self and the community while performing emergency management functions.	2	3	3
E911	E911 should consider implementing an additional 12-hour “peak load” PSAP shift in addition to the two shifts that currently make up the Department’s daily schedule. The “peak load” shift would provide additional staff to ensure that the PSAP is equipped to handle the higher volume of calls that come in during the Department’s busiest hours. Adopting a “peak load” shift would allow the Department to allocate staff more efficiently by reallocating some amount of staff from the Department’s “base” shifts (i.e., 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, and vice versa) to the peak period.	1	2	1
E911	E911 should work with HR to assess the viability of adopting salary stipends or other benefits for staff that take on additional responsibilities above and beyond the standard duties of their position, such as working on-call or serving as a CTO, or for obtaining relevant certifications above and beyond the minimum required for their position.	2	2	1
E911	E911 should identify the County department that serves as the owner of the County’s GovQA contract and work with DOIT and the identified department to gain access to GovQA for managing its open records processing process, including receiving open records request submissions, tracking open records processing workflows, creating invoices and receiving payment, and providing responsive files to requestors.	3	2	3
E911	The County should consider funding the installation and maintenance of a “Prime Site” public safety radio system backup at the location identified by Radio Communications.	1	1	1

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E911	E911 IT should develop a process for reviewing its tickets and service records to identify additional parts that IT frequently replaces. IT should then start carrying an inventory of the identified parts, including parts used in maintenance and “consumables,” such as cables.	2	3	1
E911	E911 should work with the Police Department to clearly establish the E911 and Police Department responsibilities for maintaining the Police Department’s in-vehicle laptops, including each department’s respective responsibilities regarding purchasing and resource usage. Based on these determinations, E911 may need to reevaluate staffing level adequacy for supporting this additional workload.	2	3	3
E911	E911 should begin creating and/or updating documentation for additional Department key functions in addition to the ones for which it currently maintains effective documentation (calltaking, dispatching, and QA functions, primarily). This new and/or updated documentation should contain a sufficient level of detail that personnel with general subject matter knowledge but without knowledge of the Department’s specific practices will be able to understand the broad strokes of how the Department operates. New documentation should cover topics including (but not limited to) open records management, additional detail related to the QA process, and all major Technical Services Division processes. Updates include continued updating of the Department’s calltaking and dispatch documents.	2	2	3
E911	E911 should implement practices, such as quarterly or annual reviews, that will help to ensure that all Department documentation and policies are updated to reflect current practices. E911 management should also consider updating its policy, procedure, and process documents to better track these review practices by listing and clearly identifying the original effective date, last revised date, and last reviewed date for each document.	3	3	3

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E911	E911 should reevaluate its data collection and management practices to both ensure that it is collecting all relevant data and that it is presenting collected data in a manner that supports the effective use of data in decision-making processes. The Department should review the data that it collects to ensure that collected data are meaningful, relevant, timely, and comprehensive. Potential new measurements to collect include system reliability/uptime for both the Radio Communications and the IT Sections and volume of requests and request turnaround time as they relate to the Department's open records function.	2	2	3
E911	E911 should continue to closely monitor its performance against the NENA <15 second wait time standard. If the Department does not approach the target levels despite being nearly fully staffed with fully-trained PSAP staff, the Department should consider utilizing the APCO Project RETAINS methodology or another similar PSAP staffing evaluation methodology to assess the adequacy of the Department's current budgeted staffing levels. If the methodology indicates that the Department's budgeted staffing levels will not support performance in line with industry standards, the County should consider increasing the Department's staffing budget to better align with the staffing levels indicated by the staffing methodology.	1	2	1

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E911	E911 should work with PSAP operations staff to review the adequacy of its current mental and emotional wellbeing resources. In particular, the Department should review the mental health resources offered by the County's other public safety agencies and determine whether it can provide at least an equivalent level of services, potentially through partnering with other County agencies. The Department should work with Human Resources and proactively engage with employees to ensure that they are aware of the range of mental health resources at their disposal. Finally, the Department should consider adopting and widely promoting policies laying out explicit guidelines governing how employees can utilize the mental and emotional wellbeing resources provided to them and providing protections to employees that seek out the resources in the approved manner.	1	1	1
E911	E911 leadership should reevaluate their methods of communicating with lower-level staff in order to more effectively develop a rapport and support a healthy relationship. One method that the Department may employ in efforts to build stronger relationships with staff would be the creation of an employee council or similar representative body to advocate for and represent the interests of the Department's non-managerial staff. The employee council will provide Department staff a vehicle to bring thoughts, complaints, feedback, and suggestions to leadership in a manner that likely holds more credibility in the Department's chain of command-focused organizational structure than an "open door" policy.	2	2	3
E911	E911 leadership should develop processes and communications for introducing and responding to policy changes (both within E911 and County-wide) that may have a significant impact on staff lives and livelihoods, such as the upcoming end of triple OT. Leadership should make a point to provide as much detail to employees as is reasonably possible regarding the timing of, as well as the replacement mechanism for, these significant policy changes in order to minimize uncertainty and stress, which can detract from employee performance.	3	3	3

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Facilities	The Department should consider introducing additional positions within the A&E division to allow for greater opportunities for career progression. In particular, A&E should consider introducing a position along the lines of a “Junior Project Manager” position, which can serve both to establish a talent pipeline by developing less experienced Project Manager and to provide staff that can serve as “backups” to ease the transition in the event that a Project Manager leaves Facilities. The Department may also consider introducing a position along the lines of “Senior Project Manager,” which would provide Project Managers with opportunities for advancement and help the Department retain and attract particularly experienced staff that can be utilized to manage especially large or complex projects.	3	3	1
Facilities	The Department should evaluate its current Facilities Condition Assessment plan, particularly the portion related to ongoing maintenance of its facilities condition inventory, to ensure that the plan includes provisions for periodic “fresh” reassessments of the condition of all facilities in addition to continuous condition tracking and updating. These reassessments may be performed by either third-party contractors or Facilities employees, as needed. In order to balance employee workload, the Department’s plan for maintaining its facility condition inventory may include provisions for staggered reassessments, rotating through the facilities to be assessed each year.	2	3	1
Facilities	The Department should consider including a workforce needs assessment as part of its upcoming Facilities Condition Assessment. The Department should then incorporate the results of the workforce needs assessment in future strategic planning initiatives, preparing the Department to serve as a strategic partner to the County’s overall development and helping to ensure that facility limitations do not serve as a bottleneck on County growth.	2	3	2

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Facilities	The Department should evaluate its Cityworks implementation to ensure that the system allows for the tracking of maintenance and repairs-related financial information necessary for the development of facility-specific maintenance cost estimates. Additionally, the Department should ensure that O&M staff and contractors are trained on the financial tracking systems in Cityworks and ensure that these data are entered regularly and accurately. If Cityworks is unable to provide the required financial tracking functionality, the Department should evaluate other options for tracking the required information.	2	3	1
Facilities	Once the Department has a system in place for tracking facilities costs, it should develop a facilities lifecycle management program that uses these data to determine each facility's resource needs, including both labor and financial needs. The Department should use the products of its facilities lifecycle management program to inform the Department's budgeting process by developing O&M budget requests utilizing each facility's estimated resource needs instead of past spending. The Department should also use the products of its facilities lifecycle management program to inform strategic planning by analyzing the relative costs of continued operation of aging or poorly maintained facilities and building systems against their renovation, refurbishment, or replacement.	2	3	3
Facilities	The Department should, in collaboration with OMB, the HR Department, and County leadership, use the products of its facility lifecycle management program to evaluate the relative costs of hiring additional O&M staff as opposed to the current usage of contractors to supplement O&M staffing and, based on the results of this evaluation, consider adjusting the Department's staffing levels and contractor budgets.	2	3	1

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Facilities	A&E should work with OMB to develop new processes related to approving departmental budget requests for facilities-related projects that require A&E to sign-off on a cost estimate before OMB approves the budget request. To facilitate this new procedure, A&E may wish to develop a “pre-project sheet” or similar document showing basic project specifications and A&E-approved cost estimates that departments are required to complete and submit to OMB as part of the facilities budget request process.	3	3	3
Facilities	The Department should consider contracting with an interior design specialist to develop a set of standardized interior design guidelines for use across County facilities, including specific color palettes and defined, limited palettes of materials and finishes for use in County facilities.	3	3	2
Facilities	The Department should evaluate its current Project Manager status reporting process and consider implementing a new system that consolidates all project update information into a single document. This document, which may be an Excel workbook, should use a standardized template to report all information, including using a standardized format for reporting budgetary information that allows for direct comparison of budget figures across different projects.	2	2	3
Facilities	The Department should consider performing additional analysis and/or data visualization as part of its process for compiling and consolidating its monthly Project Manager status reporting documents in order to allow for easy “at a glance” evaluation of overall project status, including progress against project schedule and expenditures against project budget.	3	3	3

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Facilities	The County should evaluate its usage of Facilities Department staff as the County's on-call events team. If the County decides to continue utilizing the Facilities Department to handle event preparation and operations, the Department should consider building and funding a team dedicated to events operations to maximize the ability for the County's skilled trades staff to perform their designated functions. Additionally, the Department should consider recouping its events services costs by developing processes for charging County departments that host events for the time spent by Facilities staff working on events, including setup, event staffing, and takedown.	2	2	1
Facilities	The Department should work to develop and finalize documentation of all major processes in procedures, including finalizing documents currently being developed related to mailroom functions and O&M administration tasks and developing documents related to the Department's Business Services function and the Department's facility operations and facility maintenance functions.	3	3	3
Facilities	The Department should develop regular (potentially monthly) touchpoint meetings between A&E and O&M representatives and leadership to discuss projects in development and other items as relevant with an aim on enhancing strategic collaboration in the project development process.	3	3	3
Finance	The County should work with the selected vendor for the Classification and Compensation Study to consider benchmarking accountants, technicians, and other roles against comparable private sector positions. Additional attention should be paid to job titles, and the County may need to consider either tailoring the titles, or creating job descriptions for individual divisions, rather than trying to use a broad-based job description for a position that may differ based on the hiring division or department. This broadened benchmarking will provide the County with additional market industry, and may allow Finance to enhance its marketing to and targeting of workers, as well as consider compensation and incentive structures more competitive with the broader market for these employees.	2	2	1

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Finance	The County should assess Utility Customer Operations and the Department of Watershed Management in an upcoming operational assessment, to better understand the roles of the employees within the two departments, including the dependencies, handoffs, and organizational and governance structure.	1	1	2
Finance	The Finance Department needs to work with HR on formal succession planning procedures, including documenting key functions and tasks, developing updated job descriptions, etc. and considering whether more targeted recruitments or executive search functions will be necessary to identify qualified candidates.	2	2	3
Finance	The Department should create several business analyst-type positions to assist with resolving CV360 issues, as well as working with other users within Finance to identify potential issues, and serve as a liaison between Finance and DOIT in identifying potential workflow changes, processing updates, or modifying user roles or permissions. Staff in these roles should have both financial and/or accounting experience as well as programming or development skills.	2	3	1
Finance	Finance may need to work with DOIT to better understand the current capabilities and limitations of CV360. Additional change management support, group live training, and opportunities for end-users to utilize the test and/or train environments, and/or additional resource development may be necessary to assist end-users in becoming comfortable and informed about how to best utilize CV360. DOIT and Finance may also need to consider a post-implementation assessment and/or fit-gap analysis, if not already planned for approximately one year after initial “go live”.	2	1	3

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Finance	Finance should identify an internal champion who is familiar with the issues in CV360 and can liaise with DOIT and the third-party consultants to document the current issues, and support identifying viable options to move forward, including assisting in end-user testing. Specifically, Finance and DOIT should work to address the issues with batch uploads, the inability to copy and paste duplicative elements of invoice entry, and issues with the punch-out system orders failing to provide adequate detail to process invoices within accounting policies. Finance and DOIT should also determine if CV360 offers optical character recognition (“OCR”) technology, which would allow the system to convert information from scanned invoices directly into text within the AP entry module.	2	1	3
Finance	The AP section should work with the Treasury Division to update the form that end-users must submit to request wire payments. The updated form should require requesting departments to include account information before the wire payment is transferred. The request form should be provided to AP, along with the wire transfer confirmation, to allow for timely and accurate posting of the expense.	2	1	3
Finance	The AP section should end its practice of physically printing, stamping and filing paper invoices. The AP section should ensure that all printed invoices are stored in the electronic payment file, and then discard the duplicative paper record.	3	1	3
Finance	The County should consider moving the Pcard Administrator role into the Purchasing and Contracting Department. If the County chooses not to make organizational changes, it should introduce processes for Purchasing to regularly review pcard activity for compliance with existing contracts, the County’s purchasing policy, and assess for potential activity that may indicate the need for a contract or agreement.	2	3	3

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Finance	The Pcard Administrator should work with DOIT to create an online fillable form. It may make sense to have this form tie into Active Directory or CV360 for verification of departmental affiliation and other identifying information. These forms should be submitted and routed electronically, with all forms stored electronically once all approvals are obtained.	3	1	3
Finance	The Pcard Administrator should work to create on-demand versions of training materials, checklists, and reminders through the InDeKalb site. For the initial training, end-users should be required to pass a test to demonstrate mastery of the material, before being given permissions related to pcard use. The Pcard administrator should create a self-led annual refresher training and subsequent testing, with all users required to take the training and pass the test at least once annually.	2	3	3
Finance	The County should introduce a tiered or points-based system violations system, where lower-risk or lower-impact violations (e.g. first loss of receipt, lack of timely reconciliation) are assigned a lower tier or lower points than a more serious infractions (e.g. personal use of card). Penalties should be assessed based on accumulation of a certain number of points, where lower point accumulations may result in additional required trainings, lower pcard credit levels, increased reconciliations, and more significant violations can result in immediate suspension of privileges.	2	3	3
Finance	The County and the Department should assess the viability of an Investment Policy that includes short-term Treasury Notes and money market accounts. The policy should clearly define procedures for evaluating available cash, and setting restrictions to only consider investments once immediate cash and liquidity needs have been met.	3	3	3

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Finance	The County should develop a comprehensive grants strategy, including criteria for objectively evaluating the value a grant may provide to the County or its citizens, the estimated cost of grants implementation and any post-grant maintenance of effort or additional costs. The evaluation should also consider whether it may be more impactful for the County to leverage County funds to support programs that could be supported with grant funds. Utilizing County funds instead of time-limited or scope-limited grant funds could expand the potential impact and reduce compliance concerns with terms and conditions associated with grant funding. The County should also consider a Grants Strategy position in the CEO and or COO's office, to assist in overseeing an enterprise-wide strategy and helping determine which opportunities are best suited for the County and which may be a better fit for community partners who can apply for grants with the County's support.	2	1	1

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Finance	The County should consider a more comprehensive shared services model for grants management, centralizing all grants accounting and financial functions, including all drawdowns and reporting, into the Finance Department. Should consider centralizing all grants financial activities. If the County does not want to centralize the grants function, the Capital and Grants Division needs to develop a comprehensive grants management manual that provides instructions and process guides for end-user departments. The Capital and Grants Division should also introduce quarterly grants management meetings that review expenditures to date, program activities performed and planned, and review of upcoming expenses. For the last quarter of a grant period, these meetings should be occurring monthly to ensure that all funds are being spent appropriately, while ensuring there is reduced risk of overspend that would require County general funds to support grant activities.	2	3	1
Finance	As several end-user departments also have staff serving in accountant or accounting-type roles, there may also be challenges in the decentralization or inconsistent treatment of financial and accounting functions. The County may need to assess centralizing all of its accounting function in the future as well. To do this, a shared services assessment would be beneficial to capture all disparate financial activities, understand the current processes and workflows, and help provide recommendations and a roadmap for centralization of service delivery.	3	3	1
Finance	The Compliance Division should be reorganized under either the Controller or the Assistant Director over Administration, and could be leveraged to assist with documenting current business processes and assisting with business process improvement and dissemination of revised and enhanced business processes.	3	3	3

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Finance	The Treasurer and Revenue Manager should create templates, instructions, and descriptions of any assumptions in a memorialized manner so that the process for projecting cash needs can be replicated in additional years if needed. The Treasurer and Revenue Manager should also create a succession plan and training plan for this function as it is critical for the County's maintenance of proper cash flow.	3	2	3
Finance	The County should contract with a temporary agency for the hiring and payroll processes for special temporary workers such as summer youth program participants and seasonal poll workers .	2	1	1
Finance	The Risk Control Manager should reconvene the County-wide Safety Committee.	3	3	3
Finance	The Department should inventory existing policies, processes, procedures, and other guidance documentation to understand what currently exists, and perform a gap analysis against leading practice. Documents that have not been reviewed or updated within the last two years should be reviewed and revised, as applicable. The CFO should appoint someone responsible for tracking change logs of changed policies and processes, and all guiding documentation should clearly identify the last reviewed and revision dates.	2	3	3
Finance	There are a number of recommendations within this assessment that would benefit from having a dedicated project champion to assist with requirements and documentation gathering. This may be a suitable short-term role for the Assistant Director of Administration. The Assistant Director of Administration could also serve in a business process improvement capacity, helping to implement recommendations County leadership selects for implementation within Finance.	2	1	3

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Fire Rescue	The County should consider reviewing and revising the intergovernmental agreements with local municipalities, as well as establishing new intergovernmental agreements, that provide clarity on the role of each political subdivision in the delivery of fire rescue services. The agreements should delineate when County resources are utilized, when municipal resources are utilized, and when overlap may be requested or required. The County should further consider whether the intergovernmental agreements should include chargeback provisions in order to recoup some costs of services delivered to municipalities.	2	3	3
Fire Rescue	County leadership should work with Department leadership to explore the options available for emergency medical services delivery and provide guidance on the direction service delivery in DeKalb County should take moving forward.	1	3	1
Fire Rescue	The Department should consider establishing a Digital & Social Media Manager position to support the Public Information Officer instead of assigning a Public Education Specialist to serve in a social media manager role.	3	3	1
Fire Rescue	DeKalb County Fire Rescue should consider working with the HR Department to reclassify the Administrative Assistant position supporting the Fire Chief to a classification more appropriate for the requirements and responsibilities of the role.	3	3	1
Fire Rescue	Department leadership should work with County leadership to determine if civilian employees can be eligible for raises alongside sworn employees in the event DeKalb County Fire Rescue receives future public safety raises.	2	3	2
Fire Rescue	DeKalb County Fire Rescue should consider working with the HR Department to reclassify the three Fiscal Office support positions to the same classification.	3	3	1

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Fire Rescue	The Department should consider establishing a Grant Manager position who reports to either the Fiscal Officer or the Chief of Staff. The Grant Manager position should be utilized to develop a comprehensive grant strategy and grant management process.	3	3	1
Fire Rescue	The Department should consider developing internal functional job descriptions for sworn administrative roles to provide clarity on duties, responsibilities, and supervisory assignments. The Department should try to limit fluidity in roles, aligning duties and responsibilities with specific roles rather than specific employees.	2	3	3
Fire Rescue	The Department should consider implementing a ticketing or work order system for the Facilities unit. The Department could consider piggybacking off of the system utilized by the Facilities Management Department (Cityworks) in order to improve workflows and efficiencies.	2	2	1
Fire Rescue	The Fire Investigations Unit should consider pursuing certification through the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police. Even if the Unit decides not to pursue certification, the Unit should consider implementing the leading practices in law enforcement proliferated by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police. The Unit should engage Department leadership in the accreditation process and/or implementation of leading law enforcement practices to help Department leadership better understand law enforcement practices and priorities within the context of the fire service.	3	3	3
Fire Rescue	DeKalb County Fire Rescue leadership should coordinate with DeKalb County Police Department leadership to ensure the Fire Investigations Unit has access to vendor contacts and training resources when the Unit implements resources or technology initially procured by the Police Department.	2	1	3

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Fire Rescue	DeKalb County Fire Rescue leadership should meet with Planning & Sustainability Department on at least an annual basis in order to communicate changes in policy and process and ensure departments remain aligned in terms of provision of services. The meetings should include a review of inter-department processes and systems to ensure workflows and functions are operating correctly. In addition to leadership meetings, the Departments should host inter-departmental training with the Planning & Sustainability Department (and Department of Innovation and Technology, as appropriate) on an annual basis, to allow for interaction, networking, and alignment of understanding among down-line employees of the departments.	2	1	3
Fire Rescue	DeKalb County Fire Rescue should consider working with the HR Department to develop promotional pathways for civilian employees. The Department should consider establishing Senior classifications for Fire Inspector Technicians, Building & Fire Plan Examiners, Public Education Specialists, and Payroll/Personnel Specialists, as well as other civilian positions without promotional pathways. In units with sworn supervisory positions, the Department could consider establishing Lead classifications that can provide supervisory positions for civilian employees.	2	3	1
Fire Rescue	The Department should consider assigning a civilian employee support role to the Health & Safety Officer to assist with coordination of programs and initiatives aimed at improving the health and safety of each of the Department's employees.	2	3	1
Fire Rescue	The Department should consider conducting a facility condition assessment of the Fire Academy, and should consider investing in short-term and long-term updates to the Fire Academies facilities and resources. The Department could consider a multi-story modular training structure, updates to the seven-story tower and connected facilities (e.g., kitchen used by recruits), and/or a replacement of the current roadway with a cement pad constructed for regular use by fire apparatus.	1	2	1

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Fire Rescue	The Department should regularly review its recruitment process, including the frequency of initiating recruit classes. Department leadership should determine how best DeKalb County Fire Rescue should balance keeping vacancy rates low with investing additional time into the evaluation of candidates and training of recruits. The Department could consider reviewing data on recruit class retention to help evaluate whether the condensed schedule is impacting retention and/or appropriateness of new hires.	2	2	3
Fire Rescue	Department leadership should enforce the use of timeclocks by non-exempt 40-hour employees. Employees who can't use the timeclocks should be responsible for entry of their timesheets into CV360.	3	1	3
Fire Rescue	DeKalb County Fire Rescue should consider working with the HR Department to re-classify the DCFR Payroll/Personnel Assistants to reflect the difference in workload and responsibility level between DCFR and other departments.	3	3	1
Fire Rescue	DeKalb County Fire Rescue should work with the Facilities Maintenance Department to develop a long-range capital improvement plan and should reserve a percentage of its annual budget for future capital improvements, similar to the vehicle replacement plan. The Department could additionally research alternative methods of funding capital improvements.	1	3	1
Fire Rescue	The Department should conduct a security audit of its headquarters and Fire Academy. The Department should work with the Facilities Maintenance Department and County leadership to identify funding and encourage buy-in to correct issues noted during the security audit.	2	3	2
Fire Rescue	The County should review the pay structure for DeKalb County Fire Rescue. Without the provision of merit-based raises on a regular basis, the County should consider reverting to the steps-based pay structure utilized by the County prior to the 2016 Classification & Compensation Study for annual increases in salary paid to DeKalb County Fire Rescue employees.	1	3	1

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Fire Rescue	The County should work to determine the future of its firefighting pension and provide clarity to DeKalb County Fire Rescue employees on the decisions made. If the County cannot make a single determination covering all decision points regarding the pension, the County should still communicate the available information as soon as possible.	1	2	1
Fire Rescue	The Department should consider promotional pathways for sworn personnel serving in administrative positions that replace a return to field operations as the sole means of promotion.	2	3	1
Fire Rescue	The Department should review the current Vector Solutions-based distribution of changes to policies and standard operating procedures to ensure that all employees, both sworn and civilian, are completing the required statements of understanding and are consist in implementation of practices.	2	1	3
Fire Rescue	The Department should review its reports in order to develop better reporting narratives. The Department should determine which metrics and datapoints are most relevant to the audience of each external-facing report and should provide brief context around those metrics and datapoint, avoiding excessive use of technical jargon.	2	1	3
Fleet	The County should work with the selected vendor for the Classification and Compensation Study to consider benchmarking technicians/mechanics against comparable private sector positions. This broadened benchmarking will provide the County with additional market industry data, and may allow Fleet Management to enhance its marketing to and targeting of workers, as well as consider compensation and incentive structures more competitive with the broader market for these employees.	2	3	1

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Fleet	Now that Fleet Management has implemented the cloud-based FASTER asset management system, the Department should prioritize working with DOIT to identify a handheld scanner platform that integrates with FASTER, to allow for the use of handheld scanners in cycle counts. Handheld scanners may assist in improving the efficiency of the daily cycle counts. Haphazard use of manual cycle counts may still serve as a valuable review control to ensure attention to detail during cycle counts, but should not be used as the daily standard when scanner technology is available.	3	3	2
Fleet	Fleet Management should assess whether or not shops would be interested in the deployment of tablets to allow for more real-time use of FASTER. Fleet Management may also want to determine if FASTER is capable of supporting audio dictation of work order notes, to support those who may be less proficient or familiar with technology.	2	3	1
Fleet	Fleet Management should reintroduce collaborative input for each department's annual VRP review and recommendation process. Fleet Management should coordinate with DOIT to develop a process or workflow that would allow for Fleet Management to upload unit information into a workflow, send the list of recommended vehicles for replacement to the end-user department, and allow them to add comments, upload documents and supporting justification, and request consideration of units that may not have been part of the Fleet Management recommendation.	1	2	3
Fleet	Fleet Management should work with the Office of Management and Budget to ensure that budget reviews include a review to determine if a position request has included the appropriate additional funds for vehicles and associated equipment, and not just the personnel component of the request. Each year, Fleet Management should provide an up-to-date list of anticipated cost of common new vehicles, as well as estimated delivery timeframe and any additional costs or timeline for installation of additional equipment.	3	3	3

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Fleet	Fleet Management may want to consider adding a data point to policy documents reflecting the last review date, in addition to the effective date and last revision date. Fleet Management should also consider leveraging change logs to capture effective and change dates, while leaving the “last review date” as part of the published policy.	3	2	3
Fleet	Fleet Management should collaborate with Human Resources to determine if it would be viable to introduce a “Lead Technician” role, who serves to help manage workload and productivity in the shop, serves as a training lead, and provides troubleshooting assistance on difficult repairs.	2	3	1
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should collaborate with the Department of Innovation and Technology to explore options and solutions for storing occupational compliance database information and generating disqualification and expiration reports within a centralized system.	2	3	2
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Occupational Compliance Division should continue working with the HRIS Division to require the uploading of driver’s licenses by employees so that expiration reports may be generated automatically and provide warnings to individuals whose commercial driver’s license is approaching expiration or who need to retake a medical exam. The Occupational Compliance Division should continue to work with the HRIS Division to find alternative options for streamlining and centralizing database maintenance and reporting which is manually completed through Excel.	3	3	3
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should establish and define a singular, annual (or other period) performance appraisal process for County departments to use to ensure standardization and consistency.	1	1	3
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should assess the current governance structure of the HR Liaisons to determine if there are methods to ensure greater accountability and consistency in HR processes throughout the County.	2	3	3

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Human Resources & Merit Systems	Department Divisions that experience issues with CV360 should continue to collaborate with the Business and HRIS Divisions to help implement and optimize appropriate workflows. The Department should continue to work with the County Department of Innovation & Technology to better tailor CV360 to the County's needs.	1	3	2
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should review sections of its Administrative Policies & Procedures, policies, SOPs, and MSC Reference and Hearing Officer Reference Manuals which are dated before 2022 and prioritize updating the most outdated procedures first. As part of the review, a "last reviewed" date should be added to specific sections or content within the documents to record the fact that the content was reviewed, even if updates or changes were not needed. Ensuring documentation is up to date will help to promote consistency in policy and practices.	2	2	3
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should consider implementing additional key performance indicators such as time to promotion, HR to employee ratio, time to resignation, and absenteeism, and employee referral rate.	2	1	3
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should continue to develop and publish a policy to enforce required minimum training hours for County employees as well as prioritization and allowance of employee time for training from all County department directors to ensure consistency in training received.	2	1	3
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should consider tracking additional metrics related to cost such as training cost per employee and return on investment and administering employee engagement surveys to all County employees to measure employee motivation, commitment, satisfaction, and to provide insights to improve the County work environment and boost productivity.	2	1	3

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Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should prioritize efforts to plan outings and team-building activities to help increase morale.	2	1	2
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should collaborate with the Department of Facilities Management to identify additional workspaces for employees to reduce or eliminate the number of offices shared by employees to help increase morale. The Department should also identify additional space for HR trainings to be held which is not shared with other County entities.	2	2	1
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should continue its efforts to conduct a classification and compensation study. The Department should ensure that an evaluation of job descriptions compared to actual roles and responsibilities is performed as part of the study. The Department should also ensure that once pay scales are assessed and potentially adjusted, the Department applies and implements pay scales consistently to existing employees and future new hires.	1	1	2
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should establish, and document clear procedures related to compensatory time accrual and the tracking of compensatory time to ensure the time is being earned, tracked, and used consistently by all Department divisions and units. The Department should establish a formal system for tracking compensatory time and should create a formal policy surrounding on-call time which may be compensated using compensatory time to ensure consistency.	2	1	3
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should assess policies surrounding alternate work schedules and holiday pay and should consider allowing employees with alternate schedules to receive holiday pay hours commensurate to their full workday's worth of pay on holidays that fall on workdays of alternate-schedule employees.	2	1	1

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Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should assess training offerings and material to ensure the Department's training function is robust and is able to be tailored by HR or the County departments to ensure maximum effectiveness. When creating managerial training, the Department should take into consideration different managerial environments within County departments.	3	2	3
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should create a County-wide policy or procedure to address training needs of all County departments and ensure that training needs are fulfilled consistently. Furthermore, the Department should implement policies or procedures which require departments to participate in tuition reimbursement to ensure all County employees are allowed the same opportunities. The County and the Department should also consider any budget related to tuition reimbursement be centralized within the Department as opposed to residing at the department level where the funds may be used for other purposes.	2	1	3
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should consider implementing an anonymous survey process in which staff members can provide performance reviews or feedback for peers and direct managers/supervisors as part of a 360 performance evaluation process. The Department could implement a 360-Degree Feedback Survey which allows for feedback to be anonymous or could integrate a 360 evaluation process into the existing performance evaluation processes.	2	1	3
Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should assess current onboarding request processes and should collaborate with the County Department of Innovation & Technology to serve as the centralized source for onboarding procedures such as processing requests for equipment for new hires. As such, there should be a process in place which notifies both the Department and the County Department of Innovation & Technology to coordinate to provide new hires with proper equipment for performing job duties.	3	3	3

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Human Resources & Merit Systems	The Department should allow departments who request access to the entire applicant pool to have access to ensure qualified applicants are being presented to departments. A more immediate step is to have end-user departments better educate the HR Recruiting employees on the specific qualifications, skills, and desired experience of candidates to consistently provide more efficient candidate screenings.	2	1	3
Innovation and Technology	DOIT should reorganize the database administration team to be housed in the Infrastructure Division.	2	3	3
Innovation and Technology	DOIT should work with the selected vendor for the Classification and Compensation Study to ensure titling is reviewed and aligned to better match current job duties, as well as industry standards. Additionally, the County should consider benchmarking DOIT positions against comparable private sector positions. This broadened benchmarking will provide the County with additional market industry, and may allow DOIT to enhance its marketing to and targeting of workers, as well as consider compensation and incentive structures more competitive with the broader market for these employees.	2	3	1
Innovation and Technology	DOIT should develop a new strategic plan aligned with the new administration's strategic priorities. The strategic plan should focus on both strategic goals as well as actions, and meaningful interim actionable items and timelines. DOIT's strategic planning process should include input from employees at all levels of the Department, and may want to consider end-user input as well.	1	2	3

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Innovation and Technology	DOIT should work with County leadership to develop and implement governance policies that define the process that will require end-user departments to identify the need for a new or upgraded technology, how the departments will collaborate with DOIT to develop business needs and gather requirements, and ensure that there is both functional and strategic proactive review and decision-making before any proposed purchases or upgrades. For data governance, DOIT may need to hire a consultant or facilitator to conduct data governance workshops to inventory and classify the County's current data capture processes as well as current data storage environment. Once this inventory is completed, the County should establish a data governance committee to set policies around management of the County's sensitive data. Depending on volume of requests after the first year, there may be a need to evaluate introducing subject matter specific governance groups, such as a judicial committee.	1	1	2

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Innovation and Technology	DOIT needs to conduct a systems and applications inventory of the County, including any purchases or implementations in-progress. Based on the results of the inventory, DOIT should conduct redundancy and fit-gap analysis to understand if configuration is needed to make the purchased solution more viable, or if another solution already implemented within the County would meet the end-users' needs. DOIT may want to consider a third-party software rationalization assessment to accomplish these objectives. Based on the results of this assessment, DOIT should work with County leadership to determine which applications should be retained by the County, and consolidate duplicative software to reduce costs and improve governance. As applicable, DOIT should also assess whether transitioning some applications to a different environment (SaaS, PaaS, IaaS or hybrid) would be more beneficial for the County. Once a governance framework and appropriate committees are established, DOIT will need to work with Finance, Purchasing & Contracting, and the Office of Management and Budget to ensure adherence to procedures for the purchase or upgrade of systems and applications.	1	1	2
Innovation and Technology	DOIT should consider implementing ITIL 3. While ITIL 4 is the newer framework, ITIL 3's focus on process is key for initial capture, consistency development, and change management buy-in. Additionally, several DOIT staff are already certified in ITIL 3 standards. ITIL 4 may provide more flexibility and adaptability in the future, but in the current state that flexibility will create more opportunities for continued work-arounds and non-adherence to the model.	2	3	3

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Innovation and Technology	DOIT should establish a Business Relationship Manager (and/or Business Relationship Analyst) role, focused on building relationships with end-user departments and serving as an initial point of contact when considering the need for new or upgraded solutions, and ensuring alignment on business objectives. These roles should be leveraged to foster more consistently positive relationships, and ensuring enhanced communication and collaboration between DOIT and the end-user departments.	2	3	1
Innovation and Technology	DOIT should create a Business Impact Analysis of current applications, identifying assessing the applications' Recovery Time Objective ("RTO") and Recovery Point Objective ("RPO").	2	2	3
Innovation and Technology	Once a Business Impact Analysis is completed, DOIT should document and test a Disaster Recovery Plan that defines how DOIT will recover services in the event of a disaster, including recovery prioritization and estimated time frame. The Disaster Recovery Plan should be tested annually with a disaster recovery tabletop exercise, which can be used to refine the Disaster Recovery Plan.	2	3	3
Innovation and Technology	DOIT should identify internal positions, and potentially a committee, to assist in the development of a standardized evaluation procedure to evaluate new or emerging technologies, including the benefits, risks, and potential costs. Development should include a proactive methodology and template for analysis, and for communication with end-users about expected notification and implementation processes. Once these procedures have been established, DOIT may want to evaluate the current application environment to identify where there may be opportunities for enhanced productivity with the introduction of appropriate and beneficial emerging technologies.	3	3	3

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Innovation and Technology	DOIT should work with the County's attorneys and the Purchasing and Contracting Department to establish language for third-party contracts that include storing of, or access to, DeKalb County data. Required terms and conditions should include required notification about cyberbreaches, introduce penalties for failure to comply with contractual notification periods, and could consider required reporting about results of SOC 2 or other applicable audits. All current applicable contracts should be audited to identify where this language is required, and updates or verifications of terms should be completed during contract renewal periods.	2	2	3
Innovation and Technology	DOIT needs to leverage a managed service provider ("MSP") to supplement the help desk and ensure that the Enterprise IT Technicians are used for value-add service support, and not call-taking. The MSP should also be used for 24x7 service delivery. DOIT should consider using the Georgia Enterprise Technology Services ("GETS") Center for managed services, or another statewide contact provider. DOIT also needs to design a campaign that encourages end-users to submit issues to the help desk via online ticket submission, to ensure more appropriate triaging and addressing of issues based on prioritization and not intake order. DOIT may need to consider a fit-gap analysis of Zoho Service Desk, to ensure that the current configuration allows for timely and appropriate resolution of end-user issues, and also helps ensure an accessible and user-friendly customer experience.	2	2	1
Innovation and Technology	DOIT should inventory available data with Zoho Service Desk, the Network Operations Center, and the Security Operations Center, to understand what can be benchmarked and leveraged moving forward. Once the new DOIT Strategic Plan is developed, inventoried data should be evaluated to determine what data points could be leveraged to assist in quantifying progress towards strategic priorities.	2	2	3

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Innovation and Technology	DOIT need to establish a communications protocol and messaging calendar with end-users, including email blasts, newsletters, and recorded videos announcing and demonstrating changes in enterprise-wide applications and systems.	3	2	3
Innovation and Technology	Once foundational elements have been established and DOIT has demonstrated value to end-users and reestablished trust, DOIT should consider a true shared services model, which could centralize and consolidate all IT resources and functions into DOIT, to help improve efficiency, cost effectiveness, and service quality.	2	3	1
Medical Examiner's Office	The Office and the County should continue its current PPP relationship based on historical performance and results.	1	1	3
Medical Examiner's Office	The Director should complete the review of the Statements of Policy, Procedure, and Practice to determine if any revisions are needed. If so, the revisions should be memorialized and shared with the appropriate Office personnel. If revisions are not needed, the Statements of Policy, Procedure, and Practice should be noted with a review date to indicate the date of last review.	2	3	3
Medical Examiner's Office	The Director should lead the effort to create a formal Strategic Plan in 2025. Any future Strategic Plan should include specific actions, assigned ownership, methods to measure success, and periodic updates as to reviewing the status of the goals. The Strategic Plan should be clearly disseminated and communicated to all Office personnel.	1	2	3
Medical Examiner's Office	The Office should work with the Fleet Maintenance Division of the Public Works Department to obtain or plan for new and replacement vehicles conducive to the roles of investigators, and such approved plans should be integrated into the County's Vehicle Replacement Plan.	2	3	2

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Medical Examiner's Office	The Office should continue the use of the Public Education Specialist and should consider growth opportunities related to public education based on demand and results.	2	2	3
Medical Examiner's Office	In order to begin planning for the current and continued growth in population, and growth in Office case load, the County should begin planning for the expansion of the current Office facility or development of a new facility. Any planned expansion or development should allow for future growth in both personnel (office space) and case load (laboratory space).	1	3	1
Medical Examiner's Office	The Office should continue its efforts to maintain and achieve future NAME accreditation beyond October 2027.	1	3	3
Medical Examiner's Office	The Director should ensure obtaining ABMDI Board Certification and NIMS Certification within the required time period.	1	1	3

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OMB	County leadership should review OMB's mission and placement within the County's organizational structure to determine whether OMB is currently the proper organization to serve as the primary office driving the County executive branch's analytical and strategic efforts. If the County's executive team determine that the executive's analytical and strategic efforts should remain housed within OMB, County leadership should conduct a thorough analysis to determine what additional resources (including personnel, software tools, and organizational support) OMB requires in order to fulfill the County's goals, set and enforce clear and measurable expectations for OMB performance going forward, and empower OMB with the independence, trust, and authority needed to cultivate the culture expected in a successful analytics and strategic planning agency. Additionally, the County should consider consolidating all County budget development and administration functions, including operating, capital, and grants budgeting, within OMB to improve coordination between the various budgeting functions and allow all three of them to more easily benefit from OMB's renewed strategic focus. If the County's executive team determines that OMB should not function as its analytical and strategic service, County leadership should review OMB's placement on the County's organizational chart and consider making OMB a subsidiary unit of the Finance Department, to bring its organizational status in line with the County's parallel capital projects and grants budgeting functions as well as improve coordination between the various budgeting functions. County leadership should also clearly identify the organizational unit(s) that will provide strategic planning and analytics services for the executive branch.	2	2	1

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OMB	OMB should continue working with the relevant software vendors and DOIT to develop additional reporting functions to replace those lost in the transitions to OpenGov and CV360. As part of developing these new reporting functions, OMB should ensure that the new reporting functions are thoroughly validated to ensure that the reports that they provide are accurate. Additionally, OMB should work with the relevant software vendors and DOIT to develop automated interfaces to transfer data between OpenGov and CV360, eliminating the need to manually export and import data whenever updates are needed.	2	1	2
OMB	The County should work with OMB to review the County's current budget development process and calendar to determine changes that could be made to reduce the time between the January 1 start of the County's fiscal year and final BoC budget approval. Potential changes could include shifting the budget development process forward in time as well as reworking the staging of the budget development process to allow for a shorter BoC budget review period. When developing a new operational budget development timeline, the County and OMB should be mindful of the challenges brought about by the County's fiscal year start date of January 1, especially those that arise when developing budgets for the years following election years, where the election and inauguration schedules create a risk that some budget development timelines require "lame duck" officials to propose and/or adopt the final operational budget. Potential methods of mitigating these concerns include adding specific provisions to a reworked County operational budget development policy that allows for the imposition of slight delays to the proposal and/or adoption deadlines in these or similar situations or, as in Gwinnett and Fulton Counties, scheduling final budget adoption deadlines shortly after the County's inauguration date.	3	2	3

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OMB	The County should explore methods to involve County Commissioners in the operational budget development process at some point prior to the CEO's formal presentation of their recommended budget. Potential methods of increasing County Commissioner involvement in the operational budget development process include requesting that the BoC pass an official budget priority resolution at some point early in the budget development process, as done by the City of Atlanta, or by inviting County Commissioners to participate in one or more of the strategic budget planning sessions held near the start of the budgeting process.	3	2	3
OMB	OMB should prioritize finalizing the Budget & Management Analyst Handbook and Operating and Capital Budget Policy. Once these documents have been completed, reviewed, and approved, OMB should develop a process to ensure that OMB policy and reference documents are thoroughly reviewed and (if needed) updated on a regular basis. When developing policy and reference documents like the Budget & Management Analyst Handbook and the Operating and Capital Budget Policy, OMB should consider including fields in the document for use during the regular review process that record the initial effective date of the document, last revision date of the document, and last review date of the document.	2	1	3
OMB	OMB should identify and develop methods for collecting and tracking additional performance measures, including new measures and targets related to individual performance (e.g., budget amendment request turnaround time, with a target to complete X% of requests within a given timeframe) and new measures related to aspects of departmental performance not covered by the Department's existing measures (e.g., total volume and/or value of budget amendment requests throughout the course of the fiscal year, and/or an overall departmental satisfaction survey covering the entirety of the budget development process). Additionally, OMB should develop processes for regularly reviewing the collected data to identify areas for potential improvement in the future and evaluate the impact of policy/process changes.	2	3	3

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Planning & Sustainability	The Department should consider switching to a system that will allow for greater automation of open records requests to help reduce manual efforts required to locate information. The Department should work to digitize all its paper documents and create a centralized system storage to reduce time locating documents from multiple locations. The County leverages GovQA in other departments and possibly could be utilized in the Planning and Sustainability Department to help facilitate open records request.	2	3	1
Planning & Sustainability	The Department should continue its efforts to create a strategic plan that aligns with the County's overall strategic goals.	1	1	3
Planning & Sustainability	The Department should continue its efforts to find a software solution that can allow customers to have one self-service portal in which they can make payments, upload plans, and have visibility to where in the process their submittal stands. The software solution should also integrate or communicate with ProjectDox and be able to produce the desired departmental reports. The Department should collaborate with the Department of Innovation and Technology to ensure that the procurement of any new system meets County IT goals and objectives.	1	3	1
Planning & Sustainability	The Department should configure its current plan review system to support residential plan reviews or should consider implementing a solution which can support residential plan reviews in addition to the Department's current requirements. The Department should also consider allocating additional positions within the Building Division to support residential plan reviews.	1	3	1
Planning & Sustainability	As the Department implements a new system, the Department should consider assessing and restructuring the workflow to obtain a building permit to start with the Planning Division and flow through remaining divisions as separate steps within the workflow so that any revisions can be communicated to the customer before the permit has completed the review cycle.	1	1	3

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Planning & Sustainability	The Department should consider establishing internal service-level agreements related to external departments which are included in the permitting process.	2	1	3
Planning & Sustainability	The Department should assess staffing levels within the Business License Unit and consider allocating additional inspectors to assist with ensuring businesses are operating with active business licenses. The proactive inspection function would help to generate additional revenues that may currently go undetected.	2	1	1
Planning & Sustainability	The Department should consider allocating additional positions to the Planning Division with the duties of zoning inspectors to allow the Department to be more proactive in ensuring that approved plans are in compliance with zoning standards and guidelines during construction.	2	1	1
Planning & Sustainability	The County should assess the position titles of Office Assistants and Administrative Specialists within the Department and consider changing titles and pay grades to match those of Permit Technicians if warranted.	2	2	1
Planning & Sustainability	The Department should identify alternative office space to house Planning Division and Call Center employees and to eliminate shared office spaces as possible.	3	3	2
Planning & Sustainability	The Department should continue its efforts to implement a certification program and establish programs to ensure Building Division employees maintain certifications that assist with job duties.	2	1	3
Planning & Sustainability	The Department should continue its efforts to commission a fee study and update the County's fee schedule for the Department's services. The fee study should include all County departments and personnel involved in any Planning and Sustainability processes for which fees are charged to the public to ensure that the total cost (direct and indirect costs) are included in the fees.	1	1	2
Planning & Sustainability	The Department should continue its efforts to create and update existing SOPs to document processes and to ensure SOPs are in alignment with departmental practices.	2	1	3

Department	Recommendation	Priority/ Sense of Urgency: 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	Suggested Timeline for Implementation: 1 = <90 days 2 = 91-180 days 3 = 180+ days	Estimated Potential Financial Impact: 1 = Sustained 2 = One-time 3 = None
Planning & Sustainability	The Department should consider and implement strategies and programs including incentives to reduce high turnover and increase retention throughout the Department.	3	2	1
Planning & Sustainability	The Department should continue its efforts to fill vacant and interim leadership positions with permanent staff members to help reduce burden and workload on managerial staff who are assuming responsibility for additional divisions or units.	1	2	3
Police Department	The Department should consider returning to the former structure of the NETs which were previously decentralized and housed within each Precinct within the Uniform Division.	2	1	3
Police Department	When the Department is able to fill more leadership positions, the Department should consider separating the Support Services and Special Operations Sections within the Special Services Division as the currently combined functions are vastly different with differing goals, objectives, and skill sets. Each Section should be led by an Assistant Chief.	2	1	3
Police Department	The Department should strategize to fill the additional Pilot position as soon as possible to ensure that operations are not adversely affected due to not being able to operate both of its helicopters.	2	2	1
Police Department	The Department should consider the use of a “Drones as First Responder” program which can amplify the amount of situational awareness while lowering the number of Officers needed per call. Unmanned/unpiloted drones are able to deploy quickly based on GPS coordinates and arrive on-scene often before Officers and relay information to dispatchers and Officers enroute and would therefore serve as an invaluable resource when responding to calls.	2	1	1

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Police Department	The Department should continue its efforts to build, establish, and invest in a Real-time Crime Center (including physical space, technology, and personnel) to support its efforts to enhance technological capabilities and reduce crime through proactive and strategic efforts. The County should also ensure that continued annual adequate budget is allowed for the Real-time Crime Center to operate efficiently and leverage emerging technologies in the future.	2	3	1
Police Department	The Department should consider replacing outdated systems such as CrimeView and ArcView/ArcGIS with new systems that are up-to-date and allow greater reporting capabilities than current systems. While evaluating potential new applications, the Department should consider whether applications can integrate fully with existing applications such as Records Management System. The Department should collaborate with the Department of Innovation and Technology to develop system requirements and a business case.	2	2	1
Police Department	In an effort to increase retention and recruitment, the County should consider revising the pension plan specifically for the Police Department (and other units of the Department of Public Safety) to make the pension plan more competitive and in alignment with surrounding Atlanta metro area public safety pension offerings.	2	1	1
Police Department	The County should also consider implementing a retention bonus program to provide bonuses to existing sworn Officers who meet certain criteria regarding years of service to incentivize and increase retention and decrease the likelihood of being trained by the County and then leaving for another position in another jurisdiction shortly after being trained.	2	2	1
Police Department	The Department should continue working towards implementing strategic recruitment and advertisement efforts to increase visibility and market the Department to potential recruits.	2	2	2

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Police Department	In an effort to prevent Officer recruits from leaving if they are awaiting the start of the next recruit class, the Department should consider reinstating the Cadet Program. The Cadet Program would also help to provide support for non-sworn law enforcement support and clerical duties within the Department.	2	1	1
Police Department	The Department should continue to make efforts and progress towards identifying a solution for the storage situation within the Property Room. Ideally, the Department should build or find a new facility solely for the Property Room to operate in that is a standalone, climate controlled building due to additional security measures that are required to be in place for storing items for evidence and safekeeping purposes. The need should be considered within the County's Facilities Master Planning initiative and should assess current and future needs.	2	2	2
Police Department	The Department should identify a solution for storing fleet vehicles in a covered, secure place that protects vehicles from outside elements and potential damage or theft.	3	3	2
Police Department	The Department should review sections of the Employee Manual which are dated before 2020 and prioritize updating the most outdated policies first. As part of the review, a "last reviewed" date should be added to specific sections or content within the Employee Manual to document the fact that the content was reviewed and whether any updates or changes were needed. Ensuring the Employee Manual is up to date will help to promote consistency in policy and practices.	3	3	3
Police Department	The Department should define and document processes and procedures surrounding use and discretion of overtime to ensure that overtime practices are consistent and standardized throughout the Department's Precincts.	2	1	3
Police Department	The Department should establish, and document clear procedures related to comp time and the tracking of comp time to ensure comp time is being tracked and used consistently by all Department divisions and units.	2	1	3

Department	Recommendation	Priority/ Sense of Urgency: 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	Suggested Timeline for Implementation: 1 = <90 days 2 = 91-180 days 3 = 180+ days	Estimated Potential Financial Impact: 1 = Sustained 2 = One-time 3 = None
Police Department	The Department should consider administering internal surveys to employees to foster employee engagement and provide an anonymous outlet for employees to express concerns about their role, operations, or culture to inform the Department's efforts to increase retention and improve culture.	3	2	3
Police Department	The Department should assess its current communications procedures to be more streamlined in an effort to mitigate misunderstandings and bias. Examples could include Chief announcements at roll call meetings, recorded videos, or emailed/printed messaging to help ensure consistency in messaging.	3	1	3
Police Department	As the Community Service Aide program has been beneficial for the County and has grown, the Department should increase its education efforts for the Community Service Aide program to increase public awareness. Furthermore, the Department should formalize goals and objectives for the Community Service Aide program in the future to help gauge the success of the program and the potential for expansion.	2	1	3
Police Department	Due to the success of the Victim Advocate program, the Department should consider expanding the program to include additional Victim Advocate positions to help support victims and detectives.	3	1	1
Purchasing & Contracting	The Department needs to reassess the strategic plan, and understand the predecessors and dependencies, to develop a comprehensive timeline for goal and objective implementation.	1	1	3
Purchasing & Contracting	The Department should establish a separate contract maintenance division, to reduce some of the workload of the three procurement teams, and to create separation between the purchasing function and contract management function.	3	3	1
Purchasing & Contracting	The Department should update requirements so that change orders that do not materially change the scope, or are for less than a certain percentage (either individually or in aggregate) can be approved by the CPO rather than require BOC approval.	3	2	3

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Purchasing & Contracting	The Department should work with DOIT to determine if either OpenGov or CV360 can provide real-time access to active contract data, to encourage departments to leverage existing contracts to obtain needed goods and services. Any solution should include a functional search feature.	2	3	3
Purchasing & Contracting	The Department should create or update contract and lease templates to ensure consistency and reduce the need for the CPO to review the entire agreement at a detailed level. The County should also consider adopting updated thresholds for what award value requires the CPO's approval for execution.	1	1	3
Purchasing & Contracting	Purchasing and Contracting should work with DOIT to develop a process to automatically email the end-user department a form for vendor evaluation each quarter. The form should be auto-filled with the award number, contract vendor, period of performance, and scope. These should be maintained in a database for use in more comprehensively evaluating prior vendor contract performance.	3	1	3
Purchasing & Contracting	Once the Internal Audit function is staffed, staff should be developing the audit plan based on risk profile and prioritizing reviews based on identified risk level.	2	2	3
Purchasing & Contracting	The County should consider a program evaluation for the current operating model of the LSBE program. Additionally, the County may want to consider a disparity study, designed to assist in determining if there is disparity in opportunities available and awarded to LSBE program vendors and other non-participating and/or non-eligible vendors. This study should focus on understanding program intent, program design, and any available program outcomes.	1	2	2

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Purchasing & Contracting	The Department needs a comprehensive inventory of existing documents that captures initial publication date, change log of any revisions, and a last review date. Once the inventory is complete, they should do business process mapping to understand how processes are currently being performed, and to identify discrepancies and potential leading practices that may be in place in one team and not others. Once the inventory of available documents and the business process mapping are complete, a single comprehensive set of processes should be established, with standards for regular review and revision. This comprehensive set of processes should then be reviewing for opportunities for business process improvement. Rather than restating processes or attaching exerpted policies and processes in multiple documents, reference should be made to the original document, so that changes are incorporated by reference into other documents. As processes change, revisions should be made in the appropriate process manual and a change log tracked to understand effective dates of changes.	2	3	3
Purchasing & Contracting	The Department should inventory available data within OpenGov and CV360 to understand what is currently being tracked and could potentially benchmarked and leveraged moving forward. Where there are gaps and inadequate data, the Department should work with DOIT to determine if additional fields could be leveraged for additional reporting. This inventory, along with the gap analysis, should be evaluated to determine what data points should be leveraged to assist in quantifying progress towards strategic priorities.	2	2	3

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Purchasing & Contracting	The County should consider moving the Pcard Administrator role into the Purchasing and Contracting Department. If the County chooses not to make organizational changes, it should introduce processes for Purchasing to regularly review pcard activity for compliance with existing contracts, the County's purchasing policy, and assess for potential activity that may indicate the need for a contract or agreement.	2	2	3
Roads & Drainage	R&D should review sections of the manuals, policies, and SOPs which are dated before 2022 and prioritize updating the most outdated policies first. As part of the review, a "last reviewed" date should be added to specific sections or content within the manuals, policies, and SOPs to document the fact that the content was reviewed and whether any updates or changes were needed. Ensuring the manuals, policies, and SOPs are up to date will help to promote consistency in policy and practices.	2	2	3
Roads & Drainage	R&D should continue its efforts to reduce its backlog of road resurfacing needs, as well as developing more formal and proactive methods to maintain and resurface roads.	1	3	1
Roads & Drainage	R&D should continue its efforts and seek additional funding if needed to come into compliance with updated traffic control device guidelines from the Federal Highway Administration.	1	3	3
Roads & Drainage	R&D should continue to prioritize implementing the program tasks, tracking of data, and data reporting related to the 2024-2029 Stormwater Management Plan.	1	3	2
Roads & Drainage	The County should begin planning for the expansion of the current warehouse or development of a new warehouse. Any planned expansion or development should allow for future growth.	2	3	1
Roads & Drainage	R&D should continue its efforts to increase County traffic signals that are connected to the Traffic Control Center.	2	3	1

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Sanitation	To remove the Director from current oversight duties, the Billing Analyst, Billing Specialist, and Delinquent Collections Officer positions that currently report directly to the Director should be moved to the Finance Section and therefore report to the Senior Fiscal Officer.	3	1	3
Sanitation	The Division is in the process of implementing additional technology to help optimize driver routes and use artificial intelligence to automatically detect safety incidents and to monitor driving practices using front and rear-facing cameras. The Division should continue its efforts to implement the Rubicon and Samsara software solutions to ensure route optimization and efficiency and to expand its monitoring capabilities for drivers.	1	2	1
Sanitation	The Division should create a plan to replace/retrofit existing automatic side loader units with automatic side loader units that allow the driver to fully sit down to eliminate current blind spots. Replacing such vehicles will help reduce the opportunity for accidents and injuries.	3	3	1
Sanitation	In an effort to increase efficiency and reduce long-term maintenance costs, the Division should work with Fleet Management create a plan to replace outdated vehicles in the future.	3	1	1
Sanitation	The County should work with the selected vendor for the Classification and Compensation Study to consider benchmarking Residential Collections and Commercial/Roll-Off/Grapppler Services positions against comparable private sector positions. This broadened benchmarking will provide the County with additional market industry, and may allow the Department to enhance its marketing to and targeting of workers, as well as consider compensation and incentive structures more competitive with the broader market for these employees.	1	1	2
Sanitation	The Division should consider implementing incentives such as hiring bonuses to recruits that already possess a CDL and other certifications or specialized driver training.	2	2	2

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Sanitation	The Division should assess staffing levels within each of the Division's four lots for residential and commercial collections and determine whether current staffing levels are adequate for workloads and service areas specific to each lot. The Division could consider reallocating existing positions to understaffed lots or requesting additional positions.	3	2	2
Sanitation	In an effort to increase retention, the Division should consider implementing shuttles and retention plans similar to those for the North lot, within remaining lots.	3	2	1
Sanitation	The Division should continue its efforts to adapt its current and newly acquired fleet vehicles to run on compressed natural gas.	3	1	1
Sanitation	The Division should consider conducting a review of SOPs that have not been updated since 2023 to ensure SOPs are up to date with actual practices. The Department should prioritize updating the most outdated policies first. As part of the review, a "last reviewed" date should be added to specific sections or content within SOPs to document the fact that the content was reviewed and whether any updates or changes were needed. Going forward, the Division should review SOPs annually to ensure accuracy. Ensuring SOPs are up to date will help to promote consistency in policy and practices.	2	2	3
Sanitation	The Department should continue to work towards implementing recommendations and management action plans to address all findings contained in the November 2024 Department Audit conducted by the County's Office of Independent Internal Audit.	2	2	3
Sanitation	The Department has the potential to enhance existing performance measures for the Administrative Services Section through converting metrics to key performance indicators that are tied to strategic goals and objectives such as the average time to process applications and fulfill requests and the most common types of calls/issues/questions received through the Call Center.	2	1	3

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Enterprise-wide	County leadership should assess meaningful ways to demonstrate to staff that individuals at all levels are seen and appreciated, and should ensure consistent and meaningful communications about the upcoming Classification and Compensation Study. Where applicable, individual departmental recommendations about restructuring job titles or classifications, adding in additional tiers or levels to allow for growth, and assessing workflows for promotion and recognition should all be considered.	2	1	1
Enterprise-wide	The HR Department should continue its efforts to conduct a classification and compensation study. The HR Department should ensure that an evaluation of job descriptions compared to actual roles and responsibilities is performed as part of the study. The HR Department should also ensure that once pay scales are assessed and potentially adjusted, the HR Department applies and implements pay scales consistently to existing employees and future new hires.	2	1	1
Enterprise-wide	County leadership should encourage departments to implement workgroups, using those established by the Fire Rescue Department as a template, to increase transparency and buy-in for the decision-making process for policy changes, new resources selection, and identification of solutions to issues raised by personnel. County leadership could additionally consider County-wide workgroups comprised of staff from multiple departments to address inter-departmental processes and enterprise-wide issues that affect multiple County functions.	2	2	3
Enterprise-wide	The HR Department should establish, and document clear procedures related to compensatory time accrual and the tracking of compensatory time to ensure the time is being earned, tracked, and used consistently by all department divisions and units. The HR Department should establish a formal system for tracking compensatory time and should create a formal policy surrounding on-call time which may be compensated using compensatory time to ensure consistency.	1	1	3

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Enterprise-wide	The HR Department should assess policies surrounding alternate work schedules and holiday pay and should consider allowing employees with alternate schedules to receive holiday pay hours commensurate to their full workday's worth of pay on holidays that fall on workdays of alternate-schedule employees.	2	2	1
Enterprise-wide	The HR Department should assess training offerings and material to ensure the Department's training function is robust and is able to be tailored by HR or the County departments to ensure maximum effectiveness. When creating managerial training, the HR Department should take into consideration different managerial environments within County departments.	2	2	3
Enterprise-wide	The County should continue its efforts to successfully provide the Bright Future Leadership Development Program ("BFLDP"), to employees based on leadership's evaluation of potential and employee performance. BFLDP should provide attendees with more knowledge of countywide operations and initiatives, equip attendees with executive level skills, and help to create a future pipeline for leadership within the County.	2	3	3
Enterprise-wide	The HR Department should create a County-wide policy or procedure to address training needs of all County departments and ensure that training needs are fulfilled consistently. Furthermore, the HR Department should implement policies or procedures which require departments to participate in tuition reimbursement to ensure all County employees are allowed the same opportunities. The County and the HR Department should also consider any budget related to tuition reimbursement be centralized within the HR Department as opposed to residing at the department level where the funds may be used for other purposes.	2	2	1

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Enterprise-wide	The HR Department should consider implementing an anonymous survey process in which staff members can provide performance reviews or feedback for peers and direct managers/supervisors as part of a 360 performance evaluation process. The HR Department could implement a 360-Degree Feedback Survey which allows for feedback to be anonymous or could integrate a 360 evaluation process into the existing performance evaluation processes.	3	2	3
Enterprise-wide	The HR Department should assess current onboarding request processes and should collaborate with the County Department of Innovation & Technology to serve as the centralized source for onboarding procedures such as processing requests for equipment for new hires. As such, there should be a process in place which notifies both the HR Department and the County Department of Innovation & Technology to coordinate to provide new hires with proper equipment for performing job duties.	3	2	3
Enterprise-wide	The HR Department should allow departments who request access to the entire applicant pool to have access to ensure qualified applicants are being presented to departments. A more immediate step is to have end-user departments better educate the HR Recruiting employees on the specific qualifications, skills, and desired experience of candidates to consistently provide more efficient candidate screenings.	2	1	3
Enterprise-wide	The County should leverage Deputy Chief Operating Officer positions to reduce the operational workload of the COO, to allow the position to serve in a more strategic capacity. Deputy COOs should be assigned functional areas that align with either the CEO's strategic priorities, or potentially leverage the four functional groups currently in use by the COO's Office.	1	2	1
Enterprise-wide	The County should consider a Grants Strategy position in the CEO Office and/or COO's office, to assist in overseeing an enterprise-wide strategy and helping determine which opportunities are best suited for the County and which may be a better fit for community partners who can apply for grants with the County's support.	2	3	1

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Enterprise-wide	The County should assess whether one to two administration positions should be created under the Public Safety Director to provide administrative support to these smaller departments. If these positions are approved, the Public Safety Director would need to establish standard operating procedures for these administrative functions, and communicate those procedures and expectations to the end-user departments.	2	3	1
Enterprise-wide	The County should assess Utility Customer Operations and the Department of Watershed Management in an upcoming operational assessment, to better understand the roles of the employees within the two departments, including the dependencies, handoffs, and organizational and governance structures.	1	1	2
Enterprise-wide	The County may want to consider an additional phase of assessment focused on wrap-around community services, such as those in Community Development, Human Services and WorkSource DeKalb, to more comprehensively the resources available to DeKalb residents, and the accessibility of those resources and effectiveness in meeting the comprehensive needs of residents.	2	2	2
Enterprise-wide	The county should consider reviewing and revising the intergovernmental agreements with local municipalities, as well as establishing new intergovernmental agreements, that provide clarity on the role of each political subdivision in the delivery of services. The agreements should delineate when County resources are utilized, when municipal resources are utilized, and when overlap may be requested or required. The County should consider additional documentation that is less binding than an intergovernmental agreement that clarifies specific inter-jurisdictional processes to align the understanding and efforts of the County and its municipalities. The County should further consider regular reviews of the intergovernmental agreements to ensure the agreements reflect changes in services provided by each political subdivision.	2	3	3

Appendix A – Performance Measures

The information in the following tables was provided by County personnel and has not been evaluated or modified by M&J apart from table formatting. This information is presented for informational purposes only.

311 Help Desk

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds or less	80%	55%	49%	80%
Percentage of inbound calls abandoned by customer before speaking to a representative	10%	7%	5%	5%
Average hold time under three minutes *	2.32	3.05	2.43	3
Average call time (in minutes) *	5.2	3.28	3.3	5
Generate and review Oracle reports to monitor trends *	N/A	N/A	Weekly	Weekly
Review and update knowledge-based information for Oracle Cloud at least two times per year to ensure up to date contacts and information are available for efficient handling of customer calls *	N/A	N/A	2	2
Identify, develop and implement a customer satisfaction tracking mechanism by December, 31, 2024 *	N/A	N/A	0%	100%

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Animal Enforcement Services

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Full time positions filled each year	N/A	N/A	57%	95%
Employees participating in training *	-	-	-	95%
Animal intake to shelter	8,176	6,473	7622	7000
Shelter occupancy rate	6%	7%	11%	7%
Animal adoptions	4,300	4,000	4363	4500
Animals returned to owner	1,167	1,100	908	1000
Animals transferred to rescue groups	2,200	1,500	1500	2000
Animals euthanized	4%	6%	7%	7%
Animal control service calls completed	9,855	10,000	13,026	10,000
Community based education and community events *	-	-	-	12

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Code Compliance

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Targeted commercial zones corridor sweeps *	-	-	-	1
Multi-tenant commercial corridor sweeps	N/A	N/A	49	35
Corridor citations issued	N/A	N/A	417	450
Countywide sign sweeps per month	N/A	N/A	2	1
Multi-family property sweeps per month	N/A	N/A	6.25	2
Multi-family citations issued	N/A	N/A	431	450
Hotel/Motel property sweeps per month	N/A	N/A	1.6	2
Hotel/Motel citations issued.	N/A	N/A	102	115
Foreclosure registry registrations received and processed (%)	N/A	N/A	100%	100%
Vacant registry registrations received and processed (%)	N/A	N/A	100%	100%
Properties submitted for abatement	N/A	N/A	23	25
Properties abated	N/A	N/A	24	30
Properties submitted for demolition	N/A	N/A	24	25
Properties demolished	N/A	N/A	28	30

* FY24 New Performance Measures

E911 Emergency Communications Center

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Full time filled position rate each year *	-	-	-	95%
Maintain Non-Compliant Performance scores of less than seven percent to maintain status as an Accredited Center of Excellence for Emergency Medical Dispatch *	-	-	-	7%
Maintain Non-Compliant Performance scores of less than seven percent to achieve status as an Accredited Center of Excellence for Emergency Fire Dispatch *	-	-	-	7%
Achieve Non-Compliant Performance scores of less than seven percent to achieve status as an Accredited Center of Excellence for Emergency Police Dispatch *	-	-	-	7%
Approximately 90 percent of all calls answered within 15 seconds to meet the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) national standard *	-	-	-	90%
Approximately 95 percent of all calls answered within 20 seconds to meet the NENA national standard *	-	-	-	95%
Supervisor and Watch Commander trainings per year *	-	-	-	2

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Emergency Management

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Meetings (virtual and onsite) offered to public safety representatives to ensure familiarization and compliance with the All-Hazard Safe School Plan *	-	-	-	8
Meeting with Class 1 dam stakeholders per year (virtual and onsite) *	-	-	-	4
Community Emergency Response Team Meetings/Trainings	12	10	24	30
Community Emergency Preparedness outreach events	10	10	19	25
New Code Red citizens subscriptions per year *	-	-	-	500

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Facilities

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Number of building automation systems upgrades	4	4	4	1
Major repairs/modernization of elevators	4	3	2	1
Number of upgrades of obsolete HVAC units/change-out R22 HVAC type units - Environmental Protection Agency air quality requirement	10	20	20	22
Electrical/lighting upgrades	22	25	4	6
Roof replacements/major repairs	9	6	6	0
Work requests completed for all buildings – carpentry *	NA	NA	1,288	1,868
Work requests completed for all buildings – custodial *	NA	NA	323	431
Work requests completed for all buildings – electrical *	NA	NA	1,274	1,928
Work requests completed for all buildings – grounds *	NA	NA	283	123
Work requests completed for all buildings – HVAC *	NA	NA	1,568	1,376
Work requests completed for all buildings – plumbing *	NA	NA	1,140	1,253
Work request completed for all buildings – other *	NA	NA	41	66

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Finance

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Number of external financial audit findings	5	6	not available	0
Number of external management points	7	4	not available	0
Reduction in number of days to produce the ACFR	0	0	not available	0
Number of calls received (Utilities Customer Operations) *	n/a	n/a	213,506	n/a
Number of calls answered (Utilities Customer Operations) *	n/a	n/a	167,263	n/a
Percentage of calls answered (Utilities Customer Operations) *	n/a	n/a	79%	100%

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Fire Rescue

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Minimize turnout time for fire incidents	51 Seconds	54 seconds	52 Seconds	49 Seconds
Minimize turnout time for medical incidents	134 Seconds	137 seconds	150 Seconds	123 Seconds
Minimize travel time for fire incidents	423 Seconds	421 seconds	392 Seconds	385 Seconds
Minimize travel time for medical incidents	571 Seconds	582 seconds	550 Seconds	546 Seconds
Fire investigations	305	294	269	250
Arson arrest	32	28	18	25

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Fleet Maintenance

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Total DeKalb County Fleet availability throughout the fiscal year	95%	95%	95%	95%
Percentage of preventive maintenance performed by Fleet employees	95%	95%	95%	95%
County vehicles per fleet technician	57	53	52	50
Miles driven (millions) by county employees	25	25	26	26
Repair orders completed	22,865	21,508	22,273	22,500

** FY24 New Performance Measures*

Vehicle Replacement

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Size of fleet	3,540	3,529	3,692	3,692
Vehicles additions	19	21	17	34
Vehicle replacements approved	246	344	349	150
Surplus auction proceeds	1,797,622	984,934	712,916	1,000,000

** FY24 New Performance Measures*

Human Resources & Merit System

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Average days from requisition to employment offer. The national government average was 51 days, now 119 days.	23 Days	40 Days	45 Days	60 Days
Employee turnover rate vs. national average	19.4% v.20.4%	24.2% v 22.4%	17.45% v 19%	>21%
Employee separations reduced by two percent *	-	-	-	<1,025
Customer service satisfaction *	-	-	-	4.5/5
Executive Leadership Training: 80 percent of approximately 44 executive leadership team attaining a minimum eight training hours annually *	-	-	-	35-Executives. Attain 8 hours
Manager/Supervisor Training: 10 percent of approximately 1,000 manager/supervisor attaining a minimum 16 training hours annually *	-	-	-	100-Manager/Supervisor
Other Employees: 35 percent of approximately 4,000 executive branch employees attaining a minimum eight training hours annually *	-	-	-	1400-Regular executive branch employees
Number of hours of leadership development training offered (Bright Futures)	2,400	In Revision Status for new Request for Proposal (RFP)	RFP in progress (July 2023 – present)	1200
Percent of eligible employees evaluated (Executive Branch)	60%	40%	54%	60%

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Host morale-building initiatives and events	3	6	5	5
Number of Human Resources (HR) customer engagements	72	138	215	215
Percent disciplinary hearing appeals, merit system council reviews and grievances upheld	80%	87%	85%	80%
Percent HR professionals nationally certified (within one year of hire)	94%	85%	87%	90%

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Innovation and Technology

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
End User Customer Satisfaction	4.85	4.87	4.86	4.85
Obtain First Call Resolution	90%	86%	83%	90%
Complete Service Requests within SLA	92%	92%	93%	92%
Deliver IT Projects At or Under Budget	90%	93%	93%**	100%
Deliver IT Projects within Timeline	95%	91%	93%**	100%
Assign Service Tickets w/in 4 hours of receipt	95%	96%	95%	95%
Ensure Email System Available (Uptime)	95%	100%	100%	100%
Ensure Devices Can Use County Website	100%	100%	100%	100%
Educate Employees Via IT Security Newsletters/Updates	12	12	20	20
Technical and Professional IT Staff Training Hours (Annual) 40 hrs/person	3600	3725	3850	3600

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Medical Examiner's Office

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Medical Examiner inquiries conducted without significant errors	2,483	2,479	2,609	2,600
Responses and investigations	843	792	832	873
Percentage of postmortem examination reports completed within 90 days of the reported death	97%	95%	94%	95%
Percentage of postmortem examination reports completed within 60 days of the reported death	95%	85%	84%	95%
Percentage of investigative summaries completed within 30-days of the reported death	74%	72%	75%	90%
Percentage of death certificates completed within 30 days of accepting jurisdiction	78%	74%	84%	90%
Percentage of staff attaining the minimum number of continued education hours/credits	100%	100%	100%	100%
Percentage of staff attaining 20 hours of P.O.S.T. Certification/American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigation (ABMDI) hours during the calendar year	100%	100%	100%	100%
On-the-job injuries	2	0	0	0
Revenue collected	\$35,616	\$28,613	\$23,671	\$46,320

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Office of Management and Budget

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Receive GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Receive ratings of proficient or better on all categories for the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award	No	Yes	No	Yes
Departments' rating of satisfaction with budget process on a four-point scale *	-	-	-	>3.5
Training participants' rating of satisfaction on a four-point scale *	-	-	-	>3.5
Unincorporated millage rate	20.810	20.810	20.810	20.810
*Months of recurring tax fund expenditures reserved	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.0
*Variance of actual vs. projected expenditures	N/A	N/A	N/A	<2%
*Variance of actual vs. projected revenues	N/A	N/A	N/A	<2%

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Planning & Sustainability

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Building permits issued	14,833	16,700	15,921	16,000
Building inspections completed	9,514	10,805	12,567	13,000
Structural plans reviewed	1,301	3,189	3,184	3,000
Electrical inspections completed	12,166	11,297	12,294	13,000
Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning inspections completed	6,989	7,037	11,755	11,000
Plumbing inspections completed	8,624	8,929	10,448	11,000
Environmental inspections	10,968	12,259	17,029	15,000
Land development reviews completed	330	301	316	331
Land development permits issued	74	63	71	75
Final plat/sketch plat reviews	116	37	81	80
Building permit related reviews	2,388	2,968	2,388	3,000
Lot combination/division reviews	161	142	152	158
Processed re-zoning applications	18	33	48	30
Processed special land use permit applications	26	24	31	25
Processed major modification applications	5	3	8	5

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Police Department

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Reduction in violent and property crime incidents ≥3%	N/A	N/A	11%	3%
Homicide clearance rate > 52% (compared to national average of 52%)	N/A	69%	71%	52%
Increase in police recruit applications per year ≥10%	N/A	N/A	78%	10%
Increase of police recruits hired per year ≥5%	N/A	N/A	18%	5%
Permanently assigned officers to the Mobile Crisis Unit per year	N/A	N/A	4	4
Officers trained in Crisis Intervention	N/A	N/A	465	550

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Purchasing & Contracting

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Maintain professionally certified procurement staff	17%	25%	45%	50%
LSBE contract spend	\$30,000,000	\$30,000,000	\$30,000,000	\$30,000,000
Percentage of solicitations meeting SLAs	60%	60%	60%	60%
Formal solicitations processed	N/A	N/A	29	35
Informal solicitations processed	N/A	N/A	4	5
Formal agreements processed (routed for signatures)	N/A	N/A	37	45
Purchase orders processed	2,204	2,500	3,848	4,545
Submitted agenda items			347	417
Non-competitive procurement requests (emergencies/sole sources/cooperatives) processed	N/A	N/A	64	70

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Roads and Drainage

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Roads resurfaced (miles by county crews)	1	4	0	5
Roads resurfaced (miles by GDOT LMIG program)	9	25	20	25
Roads resurfaced (miles by Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax program)	0	58	24	20
Patching by county crews (tons)	600	600	3,381	2,300
Signal upgrades	2	4	10	2
New signs installed	2,273	1,600	3,296	3,500
New school flashers	1	3	1	1
Roads striped (miles)	13	80	2	80
Traffic signs fabricated	2,601	3,000	3,449	3,500
Sidewalks repaired (linear feet)	910	1,700	1,700	1,700
Sidewalks installed (linear feet)	7,650	1,500	1,600	16,000

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Stormwater

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Pipe installed/replaced (linear feet)	1,500	10,500	-	-
Drainage structures rebuilt/replaced	147	250	-	-
Citizens drainage projects (tons)	560	1,000	-	-
Citizens drainage projects (linear feet)	200	1,500	-	-
Retention ponds cleaned	151	175	-	-

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Sanitation

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Municipal Solid Waste recycled at Seminole Road Landfill	9,999	9,999	40	\$40
Amount of glass recycled	1,096	912	643	\$700
Residential collections residents serviced per week	167,000	168,000	170,000	\$171,000
Residential and commercial phone calls answered	N/A	104,000	75,000	\$75,000
Revenue collected on delinquent accounts	N/A	3,253,118	5,019,778	\$4,000,000
Commercial service customer accounts serviced	N/A	N/A	7,110	\$7,000
Walk-in customers serviced	9,999	9,999	2,600	\$2,600
Gallons of compressed Natural Gas	1,435,318	1,464,287	1,400,000	\$1,400,000

* FY24 New Performance Measures

Beautification

Performance Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual
Complete mowing projects - in-house crews (74 locations/six rounds every two weeks)	76	78	82	82
Complete mowing projects - contractors (127 locations/six rounds every six weeks)	132	129	113	113
Complete tree trimming (100 locations)	245	148	306	250
Litter collection (50 bags/3,500 miles)	7,445	7,039	41,719	48,000
Service MARTA stops (30,000 locations)	51,901	50,834	35,000	40,000
Maintenance of residential abatement lots (two-week service frequency)	168	205	138	145
Herbicide and growth repair chemical application (one round to 62 locations every four weeks)	76	73	71	75

* FY24 New Performance Measures