

Stakeholder Advisory Committee Feedback on Preliminary Draft of Values and Goals

Between July 11-22, 2022, SAC members responded to a survey asking for feedback on draft values & goals statements, and an open-ended question about what vision we should aim for. There were 26 respondents out of 38 SAC members (+4 alternates); ~65% response rate. Summary data are presented below, followed by respondents’ comments about the vision.

Draft Values	% of Respondents who Agreed with Value
Protection of public health and safety	100%
Equity for all people, openly and actively addressing discrimination	100%
Transparent decision-making processes that include community input	92%
Adaptable to changing circumstances and needs	96%
Timely interventions save lives, improve outcomes, and save money over the long term	92%
Outcome-oriented with measurable goals and reliable data to evaluate success	92%
Accountability to taxpayers to uphold community values and deliver results	84%

Draft Goals	% of Respondents who Agreed with Goal
People involved with the criminal legal system have the information and support they need to avoid incarceration, especially those people who are disproportionately at risk.	96%
Low-risk offenders are safely and effectively diverted from a Whatcom County Jail sentence.	92%
Incarceration facilities promote recovery, safety, health, and rehabilitation.	84%
People released from jail have immediate access to healthcare, housing, employment, and support systems to avoid recidivism.	84%
Legislative and policy tools are used to safely limit and reduce the jail population.	80%
Coordinated services and programs are used at all points of contact in the criminal legal system, effectively closing the gaps between community, legal, and jail-based services.	84%
Facilities and staffing are in place to provide timely access to behavioral health services.	84%
Facilities and staffing are in place for successful community re-entry for those who are incarcerated.	84%
Facilities are designed and operated to meet the health, safety, and welfare needs of those incarcerated and the people who work and visit there. Facilities adequately serve the county, incorporated cities, and tribal jurisdictions today and in the future.	84%
Facilities adequately serve the county, incorporated cities, and tribal jurisdictions today and in the future.	73%

Survey feedback on what vision we should aim for includes the following:

“To promote and recommend all the tools at our disposal to prevent and reduce incarceration so that our community's need for a jail is decreased. To promote and recommend programs and tools that will support community members at risk of incarceration/recidivism in solving the root causes that could lead to their incarceration.”

“Community safety for ALL.... [by changing] the Washington State Police Reform Laws... Education needs changing... to help students be successful in the workforce and in independent living. This will help prevent issues that inmates currently have when dealing with lack of education... SROs need to be put back in school... Crimes need to be treated as crimes. Those who commit crimes, can have options to pay for their consequences of crime with alternative work center, home monitoring, rehab, etc. There are some who can't be rehabilitated... Community needs education about what a crime is, what to do when they see a crime, how to handle crimes, and when and how to report crimes...”

“Adequate treatment options available for substance abuse. Adequate treatment options available for mental health needs. A jail facility that is large enough to offer substance abuse and mental health treatment options while incarcerated. “

“No where in these statements do we have a goal or value associated with keeping our communities safe. The focus seems to be on caring for those in the criminal justice system. But if some of these individuals are making the general population feel unsafe, then we have failed our community.”

“...Long-term investments in children and families are the real solution for incarceration prevention and reduction... Given that this is outside the scope, I would say phased integration is the short and medium term solution - phase one, build new jail with services, phase two, continue to add services including prevention and post release, phase three, invest in longer term solutions that are mostly preventative in nature, phase four, create local, state and federal policies that invest in core solutions in behavioral health, housing and vocational readiness.”

“Success will be less people repeating the cycle of crime and incarceration. And it will be when gaps in behavioral health care are filled. When no one has to wait for care. When we provide support navigators at each level to sustain stability and sobriety. And when we create a 24/7 urgent care system of intervention and evaluation.”

“Vision: Interventions at the right time with the right tools at the right level with a trauma informed approach in order to prevent, minimize, or limit the interactions with criminal legal and crisis systems. Results: reduction in crimes of poverty, recidivism and repeat offenses; reduction in people released without re-entry services, or support; increased behavioral health and SUD support and utilization;”

“The vision would be to communicate these goals and visions to the public in such a way that they would support and be willing to contribute to the success of this project.”

“Vision: Whatcom county is a model for a mid-sized municipality in addressing community safety, health, and justice. Community resources are transparently used for innovative and evidence-based facilities and treatment programs. Our model provides measurable results that serve as an example for communities across North America. Our model adapts as we are informed by research in related fields and by our locally-generated data and analysis. Finally, our staff brag to their peers about how great it is to work here.”

“Services available for people involved with, or at risk for involvement with the justice system in Whatcom County shall be adequate to prevent or minimize involvement and promote health and economic self-sufficiency.”

"...We should be focused on building out our systems of care, not carcerality. Success looks like everyone in our community having what they need beyond survival. We have to acknowledge that we are working within a system designed to disproportionately harm ...marginalized folks in our community. Justice means moving away from White Supremacy Culture... By investing in preventative programs, community wellness, and accessible and sustainable resources, we can work towards a Whatcom County that is truly just."

"We envision a jail facility that begins working on re-entry and success in the community immediately upon incarceration. We have ample public defender and jail staff with resources to work together to assist people who are currently incarcerated reintegrate into the community upon release. We envision quality behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment in the jail and the use of trauma-informed approaches."

"The criminal legal system is designed to support and achieve rehabilitation in every encounter - from getting pulled over to pre-trial paperwork to getting booked in the jail. Every interaction matters and every person working in this system should be doing so with a desire to support rehabilitation and an understanding of the trauma that can lead to someone's involvement in the criminal legal system in the first place. Whenever possible, diversion should be an option when it does not put the public's safety truly at-risk."

"The vision we should aim for is an efficient, humane and varied approach to criminal justice. This vision would encompass issues involving race, age, gender, identity, and various other individual factors to treat each person in the criminal justice system as an individual rather than a blanket approach to a grouping of individuals. This approach would address the needs and requirements of each person and would reduce repetition of misconduct."

"A facility that balances compassion with accountability in the interest of public safety. Cooperative collaboration with public and private entities to meet the needs of those being served."