

County Administrator's Memo

To: Chairman Floyd Thomas and Members of the Board of Supervisors
From: Percy C. Ashcraft
Date: 10/24/06
Re: Benchmarking Analysis

The government of Caroline County has always been committed to providing services and programs that contribute to a high quality of life for its citizens. Like many organizations representing both the private and public sector, Caroline County's government has found it necessary to take an inside look at itself and begin the process of planning to serve its citizens better than ever.

This document is an ongoing product of a "Benchmark Analysis" conducted by the staff of Caroline County. This is the sixth year of a process that produces recommendations that were first presented to the Board of Supervisors in July, 2000. Since that time, the government has been working to improve its level of performance and efficiency.

The categories included in this analysis include: **Service Delivery, Employee Development, Community Involvement, Policy Direction and Budgeting and Financial Controls.** The analysis of these categories provides the most well rounded aspect of County government and touches all parts of its services and programs.

Scores to rank progress are recorded in every category. There are **188** possible points as the ultimate benchmark for the County to achieve. When the analysis was conducted in July, 2000, **110.0** points were recorded, or **58.5** percent of the ultimate benchmark. The second report submitted in January, 2002 increased the total points to a baseline of **128.6**, or **68.4** percent of the ultimate benchmark. The third report issued in June, 2003 increased the total points to **139.3** or **74.1** percent of the ultimate benchmark. The current report dropped back to **136.3** or **73.5** percent of the ultimate benchmark.

The individual categories and their percentage to the ultimate benchmark include:

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2006</u>
<i>Community Involvement</i>	57.1	74.3	75.3	75.0
<i>Employee Development</i>	56.9	73.0	79.0	72.7
<i>Policy Direction</i>	66.2	75.8	85.4	78.3
<i>Service Delivery</i>	63.7	69.8	74.5	76.8
<i>Budget & Financial Controls</i>	51.8	51.8	59.5	62.5

This document will continue to be used by County employees to improve their daily operations and also increase our dialogue with the Board of Supervisors. With that in mind, the focus is to improve the level of service offered to our citizens and increase productivity and tighten financial controls. County government wants to have the highest feeling of trust bestowed by its citizens and understands that as servants for the public we have exceptional responsibilities. It will be through improvements made by the recommendations contained within this document and future Board actions that will serve as future benchmarks of Caroline County government.

I would like to thank the members of the Administrative Executive Committee for their input in preparing this analysis. Most of the burden of establishing better government falls on their shoulders as they interact daily with their employees and the citizens of Caroline County. Members joining me on the Administrative Executive Committee include: Mr. Alan Partin, Assistant County Administrator; Mr. Garland Atkins, Director of Finance; Mr. John Sieg, Retired Director of Finance; Mr. Allen Ramsay, Director of Public Works; Mr. Mike Finchum, Director of Planning and Community Development; Mr. Donnell Howard, Director of Parks and Recreation; Mr. Ed Fuzy, Director of Fire and Rescue; and Mr. Gary Wilson, Director of Economic Development.

The Staff welcomes any input you might have into this process and we certainly encourage suggestions and feedback. The outcome of this process is aimed at providing better services to your constituents and

making the future brighter for those who choose to live and work in
Caroline County.

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Caroline County

Virginia

Benchmark Analysis

October, 2006

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Community Involvement

Total Possible Score: 32 18.3 (2000) 23.8 (2001)
 24.1 (2003) 24.0 (2006)

1. *Citizens have convenient access to elected officials and top managers to provide input on policy decisions:*

Total Possible Score: 4.0 3.0 (2000) 3.3 (2001) 3.1 (2003)
 3.6 (2006)

Current Practices: Phone numbers and e-mail addresses of elected officials and department heads are published and readily available for citizen response through directories and internet....Citizens have the opportunity to attend BOS meetings, both at the Community Service Center and in the districts....Elected officials receive information from staff when it is necessary to involve them....A Speaker's Bureau is in place....County website is utilized to seek citizen comments and conduct surveys....Appointments with citizens are made in a timely manner when requested....Roles of employees have been specified through definitive job descriptions and assignments....Public information meetings are held on a regular basis....Elected officials and staff have a greater presence at public events....Elected officials have been present to greet citizens at public events....Annual meeting was held with Town of Bowling Green and budget meetings with School Board members....Elected officials and staff are more involved in civic organizations....Voice mail was installed as part of the County's telephone system.

Action Plan for Improvement

- () On-line chats will be held by elected officials with citizens.
- () Encourage regular meetings involving Board of Supervisors, Towns of Bowling Green and Port Royal and School Board.
- () Elected officials and staff should establish data bases to send out regular information updates.
- () Satellite offices will be placed throughout the County to improve accessibility.

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2. Public forums are routinely held throughout the community to solicit general public comment about Caroline County services

Total Possible Score: 4.0 **2.8 (2000)** **3.4 (2001)** **3.3 (2003)**
2.9 (2006)

Current Practices: Board of Supervisor meetings are held throughout the districts.....More Supervisors are holding individual meetings with groups throughout their districts.....Public hearings have been held in communities and districts on different issues.....Community meetings with business leaders are held on timely topics.....Citizen boards and commissions are holding meetings in various districts.

Action Plan for Improvement

- () Elected officials and staff should have more of a presence at Property Owners' Association meetings.
- () Forums should be developed on County website.

3. Public opinion surveys are conducted on a regular basis to obtain citizen ratings of services:

Total Possible Score: 4.0 **1.6 (2000)** **3.4 (2001)** **3.4 (2003)**
2.1 (2006)

Current Practices: Transportation Survey was conducted in Spring, 2000.....Surveys have been conducted in County newsletter.....Surveys have been conducted at community meetings held by Supervisors.....Surveys have been available at libraries, Social Services Department and Health Department.....Caroline's Promise occasionally runs surveys on children's issues.....Sub-area planning groups survey the community before finalizing their reports.

Action Plan for Improvement

- () Hire professional survey firms to gather important information and reduce margin of error.

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4. *Caroline County sponsors outreach programs to encourage citizens to be active in public issues:*

**Total Possible Score: 4.0 1.8 (2000) 2.6 (2001) 2.6 (2003)
3.0 (2006)**

Current Practices: Sponsored “how-to” forums on timely topics.....Encouraged more citizen programs like Adopt-a-Highway, Neighborhood Watch, etc.....Received greater input from civic organizations, churches, property owners’ associations, etc. on all public matters pertaining to County government.....Placed suggestion boxes at libraries, businesses and other strategic locations where the public can easily provide input or make suggestions.....Implemented public transportation plan to give citizens better access to government offices.....Encouraged County government to partner with the School Board to encourage more learning programs about local government for grades K-12 that would include more field trips.....Improved signs directing citizens to various County departments and facilities.....Expanded opportunities for Senior Citizens to include establishment of central location in Bowling Green.....Established Junior Police Academy during the summer to teach youth the importance of law enforcement.....Worked with public and private sectors to improve the availability and affordability of day care.....Developed “How To” pamphlets for each department.....Published an annual Schedule of Events and Activities in January of every year.....Implemented policies to encourage local purchasing from Caroline vendors.....Implemented policy to encourage local hiring of Caroline residents.....Conducted annual seminars for contractors and realtors in anticipation of housing growth in the County.....Expanded partnership with Fort AP Hill to better utilize military resources.....Expanded involvement in regional programs.....Created “Jobs Hotline”.....Developed Fall Prevention Program for the elderly.....Established Juvenile Fire Prevention Program.....Established Babysitter Education Program with emphasis on injury prevention and first aid.....Established Disaster Response Program for Animal Control.....Established Developer/Real Estate/Engineer Banquet Awards Show.....Established a Building/Development Committee to foster communications between Builders and the County.....Published County calendar.....Facilitated sub-area planning groups in the community.....Prepared packets for new residents.

Action Plan for Improvement

- () Develop a system where public services are offered at “satellite” locations, such as payment of fees, purchase of stickers, etc.
- () Place greater emphasis on people moving into the community.

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5. *Neighborhoods in Caroline County have been empowered to make some decisions impacting service delivery in their areas:*

**Total Possible Score: 4.0 2.2 (2000) 2.5 (2001) 2.7 (2003)
3.3 (2006)**

Current Practices: Ladysmith Planning Committee.....Dawn Progressive Association.....Lake Caroline Property Owners Association.....Local Emergency Planning Committee.....Lake Land 'Or Property Owners Association.....Port Royal Historic Association.....Dawn Water & Sewer Committee.....H.E.L.P. Bowling Green.....Madison Ruritan Club (County Fair).....Town of Bowling Green (Harvest Festival).....Churches have been utilized to disseminate information.....Greater communication has taken place between groups and County officials.....Bowling Green-Milford Sub-Area Planning Committee.....Port Royal Sub-Area Planning Committee.....Established district plans and identified groups that can participate.....Developed a plan for civil defense.....Organized planning groups that complement sub-area planning committees.

Action Plan for Improvement

- () Publish a County services directory to be included on the website that would also include major publications such as the Comprehensive Plan, Strategic Plan and annual Budget.
- () Work closely with George Washington Planning Region Staff to assist with analysis of the demographics of the County.

6. *Caroline County provides assistance to neighborhoods who want to organize and be eligible for special grant programs.*

**Total Possible Score: 4.0 2.5 (2000) 3.1 (2001) 3.0 (2003)
3.6 (2006)**

Current Practices: Mini-park program provided funds for groups interested in recreation, such as Dawn Progressive Association.....Funds were appropriated for the installation of lights at Caroline Little League Park.....Landfill fees were waived for H.E.L.P. Bowling Green in demolition of old buildings.....Funds expended through Tourism Fund.....Involved civic organizations to a greater extent.....Funds were appropriated for the installation of lights at Caroline High School Baseball Field.....Developed programs that small groups can organize and assist with.....Brought in outside agencies that can explain resources.....Accessed congressional staff to address

needs.....Explored faith based grant programs.....Worked closer with RADCO to research grant opportunities.

Action Plan for Improvement

- () Encourage groups to get involved with the Community Pride Program.

7. Caroline County makes an effort to promote the cultural diversity of its residents through special events such as festivals, parades and neighborhood pride parties:

Total Possible Score: 4.0 **2.6 (2000)** **2.4 (2001)** **2.6 (2003)**
3.9 (2006)

Current Practices: Fairs & Festivals sponsored by the former Tourism Committee.....Worked with the Sheriff’s Office to implement National Night Out.....Increased funding for County Fair.

Action Plan for Improvement

- () Conduct a needs assessment to see what activities are not being held, or what groups are not being properly recognized.

8. A community needs assessment has been conducted to gauge the effectiveness and responsiveness of current government services:

Total Possible Score: 4.0 **1.8 (2000)** **3.1 (2001)** **3.4 (2003)**
2.4 (2006)

Current Practices: Implemented system of follow-up for citizens to rate department responsiveness after they were provided a service.....Citizens are frequently surveyed through the County newsletter.

Action Plan for Improvement

- () Continue to survey citizens frequently through the County newsletter.

Employee Development

Total Possible Score: 52 29.6 (2000) 38.0 (2001)
 41.1 (2003) 37.8 (2006)

1. *Employees have the opportunity to participate in setting objectives and performance requirements for their work groups:*

Total Possible Score: 4.0 2.4 2000 3.1 2001 3.3 2003
 3.6 2006

Current Practices: Staff meetings.....Department heads and front-line supervisors are leading more one-on-one and small group meetings.....Information on short and long-range goals are being shared with employees so they know the direction the County is going.....Department heads continue to make visits to other Counties to compare operations.....Employees are participating in role shifting to create better understanding of job situations.....Employees are meeting and participating in discussions prior to submittal of six month goals.....Employees are participating in follow-up of six month goals after Board of Supervisors' approval.....Employees are encouraged to give more dialogue and feedback in performance evaluations.....Employees are asked how they would choose to participate in department discussions.....Employees have more ways to generate workplace suggestions.....Employees are being more involved in problem solving.

Action Plan for Improvement

() Conduct greater training opportunities for second line supervisors.

2. *Effective communications systems are in place to encourage employees to receive and provide feedback to management:*

Total Possible Score: 4.0 2.8 (2000) 2.9 (2001) 3.2 (2003)
 3.5 (2006)

Current Practices: Staff meetings.....Performance evaluations.....Suggestion boxes.....Internal memorandums from County Administrator and Department heads.....County Administrator, Department heads and front line supervisors are holding more one-on-one and small group meetings.....E-mail is being more utilized.....County

Administrator and Department heads maintain an open-door policy.....Employees are being visited at their worksite.....Phone system that contains voice mail.....Employee handbook was developed and given to every employee.....Employee satisfaction survey was conducted and results implemented.....Notes and cards of encouragement are routinely sent to all employees.....Employee webpage.....

Action Plan for Improvement

- () **Expand employee suggestion incentive program.**

3. Training programs in Caroline County have been set up to allow employees to:

a. Refine their skills to keep current on new technologies and procedures to do their jobs better:

Total Possible Score: 4.0	<u>2.4</u> 2000	<u>3.3</u> 2001	<u>3.6</u> 2003
<u>3.0</u> 2006			

Current Practices: Six hours mandatory training implemented in January, 2000, 12 hours in January, 2001, 24 hours in January, 2002.....County provides continuing education which is reimbursable and pays for all training directly related to job description.....Individual skills were defined for each employee and annual training goals were developed for each department.....Each department defined their skill levels that need to be improved to meet the goals and objectives of the County.....Training budgets are in place for every department.....Employees have greater awareness regarding training and educational opportunities.....More employees have been encouraged to take computer classes and training.....IT Committee and Technology Manager help to address employee needs.

Action Plan for Improvement

- () Hold small group classes led by the IT consultant.
- () Identify strengths and weaknesses of all employees through technology and set goals for improvement.
- () Develop more structured training schedule.

() Utilize the website to assist employees regarding education and training.

b. Develop new skills to prepare for advancement or other careers within the organization:

Total Possible Score: 4.0 **2.1 (2000)** **2.8 (2001)** **3.1 (2003)**
2.5 (2006)

Current Practices: Six hours mandatory training implemented in January, 2000, 12 hours in January, 2001, 24 hours in January, 2002.....County provides continuing education which is reimbursable and pays for all training directly related to job description.....Mentor program for new hires was established.....Supervisors developed more coaching techniques to share with subordinates.....Cross-training opportunities have been increased.....Job responsibilities are shared among departments.....Hiring practices have been adjusted to emphasize promoting from within whenever possible.....Developed career ladder programs in most departments, including evaluation of job descriptions and pay scales.....Job openings are posted internally to give employees opportunity to change departments.....Greater participation in the Wellness Program.....Employees attend staff meetings and BOS meetings from time to time to build understanding of government process.

Action Plan for Improvement

() Develop new positions that require special skill sets to meet needs of citizens.

c. Learn how to interrelate more effectively with other employees and co-workers from different cultural backgrounds:

Total Possible Score: 4.0 **1.5 (2001)** **2.2 (2001)** **2.4 (2003)**
2.2 (2006)

Current Practices: Employees interact mostly through social gatherings and meetings.....Job Satisfaction survey gave employees an opportunity to express likes, dislikes, customs, etc. of their job.....Team building was promoted through training exercises and seminars.....Provided specific training for males who work for females.

Action Plan for Improvement

() Hold direct training seminars on the subject.

- () Provide specific training for males who work for females.
- () Provide Myers-Briggs training for employees.

4. *Alternative employment options (e.g. job sharing, flexible hours) are available in Caroline County:*

Total Possible Score: 4.0 **2.5 2000** **3.2 2001** **3.7 2003**
3.5 2006

Current Practices: Implement schedule changes on a case-by-case basis, except for regular practices in the Public Works Department.....Some departments are working four, 10-hour days.....Adjusted schedules from traditional 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. to other alternatives that could include Saturdays.

Action Plan for Improvement

- () Review positions to see how two part-time positions can make up one full-time position.

5. *Minority employees in my organization are encouraged to pursue advancement opportunities:*

Total Possible Score: 4.0 **2.4 (2000)** **3.3 (2001)** **2.9 (2003)**
2.6 (2006)

Current Practices: Promotion was given to female employees in 2000 to department supervisor and department coordinator.....African-Americans and women have been encouraged to apply for job openings through notification of all sources.....Greater training opportunities were provided to minority employees.

Action Plan for Improvement

- () Enroll African-Americans and women in formal education programs tied to financial incentives.

