

# Schoharie County Operations Review Committee

## Methodology Outline

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It is a best practice that enhances transparency in any large-scale organizational change effort to outline an overall methodology to guide the research, fact gathering and analysis of the effort. Over the years in Schoharie County there have been many suggestions for making various changes to county government operations, but there apparently has never been a rigorous, structured, independent review of way county government departments operate. The overall goal of the effort is to do just such a review and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors that will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of county operations. While it is likely that there will be some document collection, the majority of the research will be iterative interviews and conversations, documented and developed into more detailed proposal narratives.

### OBJECTIVE

The objective of the review is to align performance, function, and structure in three areas: Human Services, Human and Financial Resource Management and Tax Administration.

### STEP 1: INITIAL FACT GATHERING

Gather specific information about Schoharie County government operations in two categories: **General Information** and **Program Specific Information** (see attached list of questions). The general information is needed to place the program specific information in county-government-wide context. It includes information such as overall organization chart, form of government, simple budget and workforce characteristics.

The program specific information is needed to place functional/workflow/program specifics into specific departmental context. The fundamental task here is to list and describe the major functions/workflows/programs in each department directly involved in the proposed changes. This list/description much also include information specific legislative mandate for the function (not department), the program logic that links the activities of the function to the legislative goal, performance metrics, and relationships or linkages required to perform the function.

### STEP 2: DEVELOP PRELIMINARY ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL

Once the data/information in step 1 has been completely gathered and documented, the next step is to develop a detailed organizational model consistent with the original proposal but informed by the initial fact gathering. At this stage, none of the proposals should be eliminated, but all of the detailed proposals should include specific and detailed questions, concerns or barriers to each preliminary

organizational model. At this stage of the process, cost and/or implementation concerns, should be addressed at a later stage of the process.

### **STEP 3: PRELIMINARY ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTIES**

With all three preliminary, detailed organizational models developed in step 2, the focus shifts to testing efficacy of the proposals against the experience of other counties. This should occur in two phases. The first phase is to gather information and compare the specific proposal to a county that has already implemented a similar organizational model. This comparison should address some of the questions, concerns or barriers already identified in step 2. This comparison should also yield additional insights, questions, concerns or barriers to success for each proposal. With this information, phase two involves engaging in structured discussions with other small, upstate, rural counties with lower government costs about their overall structure, functions and performance to see if any of the Schoharie proposals would, in the opinion of these other counties, would improve or hurt performance.

### **STEP 4: COMMITTEE DEVELOPS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

With steps 1-3 complete, the committee will need to evaluate all of this information and make final recommendations for the Board. As an initial step in the process, the committee should discuss in advance criteria for evaluating any of the proposals. It will also be likely that the committee with the fruits of steps 1-3 work will want to revise the preliminary organizational models.

### **STEP 5: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CONSIDERS AND ADOPTS, AMENDS OR REJECTS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The committee should recommend, and the Board should consider an organizational model that will become the official expression of the intent of the Board, but there are subsequent steps for implementation and evaluation.

### **STEP 6: IMPLEMENTATION**

With Board adoption of some or all of the committee's recommendations, the focus moves to implementation. It will be vitally important for the overall success of the effort to implement these changes thoughtfully and compassionately while strictly complying with all regulatory requirements. The County Operations Review Committee or a successor group should develop an implementation plan and oversee actual implementation.

### **STEP 7: FINANCIAL & WORKFORCE ANALYSIS**

The financial impact of whatever changes the Board adopts and are successfully implemented should be closely monitored beginning with the fiscal year immediately follow the year in which actual

implementation is completed and continue for at least four more years. This analysis should address costs, size of workforce, performance metric trends and impact on employee morale.