Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment
Laboratory Services Division

2008-2010 Strategic Plan
February 19, 2008
Revised August 2009 (Added 2009–2010 Strategic Projects)

Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction

The Laboratory Services Division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is pleased to present its revised 2008-2010 Strategic Plan. Based on an analysis of trends and the Lab's strengths and weaknesses, the Strategic Plan outlines four key areas that are critically important to the Lab in the upcoming years as well as long range goals, objectives, and specific 2008 strategic initiatives/projects. Working in these areas will help the Lab fulfill its purpose and work toward its vision of the future.

This Strategic Plan replaces the Lab's original plan established in 2004. While the Lab completed many of its strategic initiatives over the past three years, it faces many challenges and opportunities in the future. Like the past three years, the Lab's leadership is committed to following through on this strategic plan, and reviewing its progress and accomplishments and re-establishing strategic initiatives annually, to ensure that the Lab remains focused on longer-term, strategic matters.

The 2008-2010 Strategic Plan includes the following:

- The mission and vision statements of the Laboratory Services Division;
- The strategic areas that the Division must address over the long term;
- Long-range goals and objectives; and
- Strategic initiatives/projects for 2008.

Section 2: Mission & Vision of the Laboratory Services Division

A *mission statement* expresses the fundamental purpose of an organization. It explains why the organization – or the Laboratory Services Division of CDPHE – exists.

A *vision statement*, on the other hand, defines a preferred future of an organization. It describes what the organization desires to become or do in the future: what it should be at its best.

The mission and vision of the Laboratory Services Division are as follows.

Mission of the Laboratory Services Division
(October 15, 2004; Revised January 13, 2006, Revised January 26, 2007)

The mission of the Laboratory Services Division is to protect
the health, safety, and environment of all Coloradoans by providing
accurate and timely laboratory analyses and information.

Section 3: Strategic Issues, Goals, Strategies, & Strategic Initiatives

Strategic issues are internal or external issues that are fundamentally important to the organization over the long-term. They are often the underlying or more encompassing issues of what superficially appear to be numerous unrelated or loosely related problems that significantly impact the long-term success of the organization. *Key result areas* are critical, must achieve, make or break performance categories. They are what an organization must focus on over the long-term to ensure progress and success. Because of their magnitude, strategic issues and key result areas must be addressed over the long-term in order for the organization to move toward its vision and fulfill its mission.

Strategies are comprehensive, institutional responses to the strategic issues or the key result areas. Strategies include (1) several complementary long-range *goals*, which are broad statements that define the desired, end targets that the organization will strive to achieve over the next 3-5 years, for each of the issue areas, and (2) several objectives for each of the goals. *Objectives* are general statements that describe the manner in which the end result – or goal – will be achieved. *Strategic or priority projects* are the shorter-term (1year) strategic and operational priorities of the organization. As they are completed, the organization should be making progress on accomplishing the long-range goals and responding effectively to the strategic issue areas.

In 2004, the Lab identified 5 strategic issue areas. They were: (1) Funding; (2) Workforce Development; (3) Information Systems; (4) Relationships with Customers, Stakeholders, & Partners; and (5) Analytical Technology.

The 2008 strategic planning process yielded changes to the Lab's future strategic issue areas. The changes including updated strategic issue descriptions, revised long-range goals and objectives, and 2008 strategic/priority projects are presented below.

Strategic Issue Area #1: Adequate & Stable Funding

Funding for the Laboratory Services Division continues to pose major challenges; it is inadequate, unstable, and unpredictable. And, there are limitations on what the Lab can do to mitigate its funding situation given the laws and budget process in Colorado. The funding challenges include the following:

1. Public health generally and the Lab's services specifically are not a high priority in the State.
2. The Lab's budget is determined by the legislature and the Department, and thus, the Lab has little control over its general funding level.
3. There are competing interests within the Department for limited general funds.
4. There are severe limitations placed on the Lab related to funding due to Colorado's budget cycle and Tabor.
5. The Lab faces special challenges when setting fees. The Lab cannot set fees too low or too high. Fees set too low (1) will not enable the Lab to recover its costs and (2) may undercut or appear to compete with private labs. Fees set too high will result in a loss of customers and the Lab is restricted from making a profit. In short, the Lab has to collect enough fees to be self-sufficient but not too much to earn a profit.
6. The funding structure is limiting and problematic. The Lab cannot maintain a fund balance (except for newborn screening).
7. The Lab is too dependent on grant funding, and the money from grants can only be used for specific things/activities (i.e., it is very categorical).
8. Finally, the Lab lacks experience in obtaining direct grant, or other non-state, funding.

The Lab works with many stakeholders and partners, and provides many services to a wide range of customers. While its image is improving and it enjoys effective relationships with its many customers, stakeholders, and partners, in the past, the Lab has maintained a relatively low profile. To date, it has not been very visible or vocal about its resource needs with the legislature, Governor's Office, or within the Department.

Below are the long-range goals, objectives, and strategic projects for this area.

Goal 1.1: The Lab will receive adequate and stable funding from the Colorado Legislature (the general fund).

Objective 1.1.1: Educate, raise awareness, and convince the Legislature and Governor's Office of the value of laboratory services.

Objective 1.1.2: Continue to collaborate with local public health agencies and organizations.

Objective 1.1.3: Build support for the Lab among the Department's leadership.

Goal 1.2: The Division will have adequate and appropriate resources to support core laboratory functions.

Objective 1.2.1: Continually review fee structures and recover costs more effectively.

Objective 1.2.2: Pursue alternative and creative funding solutions.

Objective 1.2.3: Replace eliminated grant funds with fee for service testing, where possible.

Objective 1.2.4: Evaluate viability of lab programs and develop a business case to support change requests.

STRATEGIC ISSUE #1: ADEQUATE & STABLE FUNDING	
2009-2010 Strategic Projects (August 2009)	**Priority Level**
1. Formalize/improve fee setting/cost analysis process (Hugh, Laurie, Andrea, Dave)	2
2. Continue to identify new grant opportunities/new grant partners; improve bidding & monitoring processes (Hugh, Laurie, Suzanne, Jeff)	1
3. Improve reporting; do more timely/frequent expenditure analysis (Andrea, Dave, Managers)	1
4. Improve budget tracking & planning; give managers monthly budget information (Andrea, Dave, Managers)	1
5. Conduct online, fee-based preparedness training (Suzanne)	2
6. Conduct one tuition-based training at the Lab (Suzanne)	2

Strategic Issue Area #2: Workforce Development & Positive Work Environment

The continued development of the Lab's workforce is essential to achieving its long-range goals and overall success. Further, ensuring a positive and motivating work environment is crucial to recruiting and retaining talented staff and assisting with employee satisfaction. To that end, the Lab is committed to (1) recruiting and retaining a workforce that will enable the Lab to remain competitive in the marketplace and provide the highest quality of services to its customers; (2) continuing to improve the work environment/work culture; and (3) providing training and education to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of its workforce.

Recruitment and Retention. Recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified, credentialed, and certified staff remain a hire priority for the Lab. Further, it is increasingly important to review the need for staff and evaluate workloads as positions are vacated and/or as workloads change. Additional perks and flexibility should be explored to be able to attract and retain talented staff. Finally, managers should use probationary periods more effectively, to ensure that staff are a good fit and possess the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to succeed at the Lab.

Work Environment/Work Culture. The Lab also sees opportunities to improve its work environment – to ensure that the work culture is positive and motivating. For example, the Lab recognizes the need to: (1) improve internal communication; (2) expect, encourage, and reinforce productive behavioral norms; (3) ensure that new people feel more welcomed and accepted; and (4) reward staff for being involved in bringing about necessary changes and providing excellent customer service.

Training and Education. Providing improved training and educational opportunities to Lab staff remains a high priority. In doing so, the Lab needs to continue to identify cost effective training opportunities in technical/scientific areas as well as soft skills areas such as customer service, communication skills, etc. Expectations related to the competencies of staff (knowledge, skills, and abilities) need to be continually raised/elevated in order to continue to enhance the Lab's reputation and provide quality laboratory services.

The long-range goals, objectives, and strategic projects for this area are listed below.

Goal 2.1: The Division will employ and retain a highly qualified and skilled workforce.

Objective 2.1.1: Recruit and hire staff using position-specific qualifications based on competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) needed now and in the future.

Objective 2.1.2: Provide on-going training and professional development opportunities to all Lab staff.

Objective 2.1.3: Implement perks and flexibility that are appealing to staff and will improve the work environment.

Objective 2.1.4: Implement succession planning, training, and mentoring opportunities.

Goal 2.2: All employees will be motivated and satisfied with their jobs.

Objective 2.2.1: Recognize outstanding performance in a timely manner.

Objective 2.2.2: Communicate employees' value to the organization.

Objective 2.2.3: Provide and support opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Objective 2.2.4: Improve the work environment/work culture of the Lab.

Goal 2.3: The workforce maintains competence with the Lab's technologies and processes.

Objective 2.3.1: Identify the competencies needed to use the advanced/scientific technologies effectively.

Objective 2.3.2: Train staff on Lab processes, systems, and advanced/scientific technologies.

STRATEGIC ISSUE #2: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT	
2009-2010 Strategic Projects (August 2009)	**Priority Level**
7. Maintain recruiting efforts/ materials; continue to disseminate information/ highlight benefits of working at the Lab (Suzanne, Andrea, Jeff)	3
8. Develop & post workplace values; take actions that reinforce a respectful workplace (Dave, Managers)	1
9. Continue to conduct internal training/cross-training opportunities (processes, technology, soft skills) (Andrea, All managers)	1

Strategic Issue Area #3: Technology (IT & Scientific)

The effective and expanded use of technology is critically important to the Lab in the future. Technological enhancements are necessary to improve internal operations, provide greater online access and services to the Lab's customers, and remain competitive in laboratory testing. In short, the Lab needs to (1) continue to improve its IT system for internal and external use and (2) have and effectively use scientific/analytical technology to enhance and expand the Lab's testing services.

IT System. IT functions in the State are being centralized, which poses special challenges for the Lab. The Lab's IT is now controlled and supported by the Department and its IT staff report to State OIT. Thus, the Lab's ability to make changes and improvements is now limited; future changes will require approval from outside the Lab.

In addition, the Lab currently has two systems: NBS and LITS. The new build on LITS, which supports the internal work of the Lab, is addressing old IT problems. While the system does not have a billing component, creative work-arounds now support invoicing.

Strategically, the Lab must move toward electronic deliverables, and enabling and encouraging customers and partners to do business with the Lab over the Internet. Currently, customers cannot order testing, access testing results, or make payments online/via the Internet. Increasingly, customers and partners are asking for and expecting it, and the trend continues to move in that direction.

The Lab also needs to continue to improve its internal operations. Currently, it is too dependent on paper and tedious, manual processes exist (e.g., for accessing public records). Finally, some staff are underutilizing and/or not following policies/procedures for the current IT system.

Scientific/Analytical Technology. Updating and purchasing new laboratory testing technologies are ongoing challenges for the Lab. In fact, the Lab cannot remain competitive, continue to provide high quality testing services, and/or expand its testing services without up-to-day and new technologies.

Specific challenges include: (1) not having a rolling fund to update, replace, and purchase new technologies; (2) the current state budget cycle and purchasing guidelines/requirements are impediments to acquiring the needed technologies; (3) the Lab lacks a tracking, review, and decision making process related to analytical technologies; (4) the Lab has trouble finding ways to pay for service contracts, to name a few.

Below are the long-range goals, objectives, and strategic projects for this area.

Goal 3.1: The Division will have a comprehensive and effective financial and data management systems including e-business solutions.

> Objective 3.1.1: Enhance invoicing and financial tracking systems.

Objective 3.1.2: Improve and automate internal support services and systems to increase efficiency.

Objective 3.1.3: Enhance electronic reporting capabilities.

Objective 3.1.4: Apply e-business solutions to business processes and services enabling external customers to do business with the Lab over the Internet.

Objective 3.1.5: Involve staff in systems development and implementation.

Objective 3.1.6: Participate in and support national initiatives to design and deploy a public lab information system.

Goal 3.2: The Division uses up-to-date and new scientific technologies.

Objective 3.2.1: Develop and implement effective equipment assessment and acquisition strategies.

Objective 3.2.2: Actively look for and identify vendor and grant opportunities.

Objective 3.2.3: Partner with and leverage vendors/manufacturers for equipment and supplies.

STRATEGIC ISSUE #3: TECHNOLOGY (IT & SCIENTIFIC)	
2009-2010 Strategic Projects (August 2009)	**Priority Level**
10. Implement electronic results reporting (Dave, Brenda)	1
11. Expand internal media ordering to store room items; apply the model to other areas of the Lab (Andrea, Brenda)	2
12. Complete implementation of/enhance online testing and training for the EBAT program (Jeff, Suzanne)	2
13. Assess status of & develop a plan to replace instrument/equipment needs (Hugh, Laurie)	2
14. Replace the newborn screening server architecture configuration; work with Central IT to develop the architecture, expand server capacity (Dave, Dan, Brenda)	1
15. Complete Internet redesign Billing FAQs, Compendium (Suzanne, Andrea, Brenda)	1
16. Continue to enhance/expand invoicing system (Andrea,)	3
17. Prioritize & make decisions about the Lab's IT needs; replace antiquated desktops with a few kiosks (Brenda, managers)	2

Strategic Issue #4: Service Expansion & Improvement

The Lab's long-term viability depends on its ability to grow. That is, it must improve and expand its services in two areas:

1. Expand its customer base for its existing services (i.e., do more of what it is currently doing); and
2. Expand into new service/testing areas (i.e., expand into new testing areas for existing customers and gain new customers).

Expand Customer Base for Existing Services. There are many divisions and other agencies that do not currently use the Lab's services at all or to the fullest extent. They include other divisions within the Department, other Departments, etc. Thus, the Lab sees the need and opportunity to grow its existing services and expand its customer base within the limits of the Tabor Amendment.

Expand into New Service/Testing Areas. In addition, the Lab needs to expand into new service/testing areas. As a leader in the industry and to be recognized as an innovative quality public health laboratory (from the vision statement), the Lab wants to anticipate emerging testing/service needs and position itself to be the organization that can best meet those needs.

Success in this area is dependent on the Lab's ability to continue to enhance its reputation and build effective relationships with its many customers and potential customers. Other actions that can help in this area include: (1) continuing to produce high quality work in an expeditious and cost effective manner; (2) being more accessible and following through; (3) doing more outreach within and beyond the Department (e.g., with academia, other state agencies, with potential customers); (4) improving the services provided to all internal and external customers; (5) producing and disseminating more informational materials about the Lab's services; (6) communicating more effectively with stakeholders; and (7) seeking and participating in more grant partnering opportunities.

The long-range goals, objectives, and strategic projects for this area are listed below.

Goal 4.1: The Division will expand its existing services (within the limits of the Tabor Amendment).

> Objective 4.1.1: Continue to improve the quality of the Lab's services and customer service to customers.

> Objective 4.1.2: Continue implementing effective promotional and outreach practices/ strategies aimed at the Department and other customers that do not currently use the Lab's services.

> Objective 4.1.3: Educate and work with legislators and staff to gain increased spending authority.

Objective 4.1.4: Evaluate/assess the viability of all existing services.

Objective 4.1.5: Build strong relationships and communicate effectively with existing, new, and potential customers.

Goal 4.2: The Division will expand into new service/testing areas.

Objective 4.2.1: Proactively search for new service areas that respond to emerging public health needs and are financially viable.

Objective 4.2.2: Seize opportunities to expand into new service/testing areas.

Objective 4.2.3: Develop and implement new promotional and outreach practices aimed at the new service/testing areas and existing and potential customer base.

STRATEGIC ISSUE #4: SERVICE EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENT	
2009-2010 Strategic Projects (August 2009)	**Priority Level**
18. Provide ONLINE customer service training for all staff (Suzanne)	1
19. Improve access to customer complaint data base/fiscal; improve reporting to managers (add features such as search capabilities) (Suzanne, Andrea, Dave)	2
20. Proactively reach out to & inform key people/groups/customers about the Lab; develop informational materials (e.g., do an open-house/tours, etc.) (Suzanne)	3
21. Enhance the courier network; continue to add funding (Hugh, Andrea, Brenda)	1
22. Continue to develop joint grant projects across labs (microbiology and chemistry) to expand services/testing areas (Hugh, Laurie)	3
23. Explore/evaluate new types of testing (Laurie, Hugh, Jeff, Suzanne)	2
24. Prepare environmental list packet (Laurie, Jeff)	2