



CREATING AN ORGANIZATIONAL ‘ECOSYSTEM’ FOR EFFECTIVE ASSET MANAGEMENT

Five key elements can lay the foundation for building a robust asset management organizational strategy that garners internal support and delivers impactful results

Infrastructure organizations are challenged with implementing asset management programs within a wider sphere of corporate initiatives that include strategic planning, capital planning and master planning, and policy objectives such as resilience and social equity.

Asset management is an integrated set of processes designed to minimize the lifecycle costs of infrastructure assets at an acceptable level of risk, while delivering established levels of service. When applied effectively it balances costs, opportunities and risks against the desired performance of assets.

Leading agencies have aligned with these efforts and incorporated them as an integral part of a wider organizational “ecosystem” of connected programs, strategies and objectives.

However, when agencies tackle multiple strategic priorities at the same time, it can quickly overwhelm staff and employees with initiative overload.

Leadership can avoid this risk by proactively communicating and demonstrating clear integration and alignment, connecting infrastructure decisions with long-term policy objectives. These common techniques have been effective in creating the foundation to a successful organizational asset management ecosystem:

- Build common strategic plan goals that are embedded throughout other initiatives — including asset

management — by setting clear boundaries and objectives for each effort.

- Directly incorporate resilience, sustainability, social equity and strategic drivers into asset management decision criteria, with a focus on risk assessment and project prioritization methodologies.
- Embrace shared performance metrics that cross departmental boundaries, including asset management, operations and maintenance, planning and engineering, finance and customer service.



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The success of an asset management program within a wider sphere of corporate initiatives can be driven by an organizational “ecosystem” of connected programs, strategies and objectives.



Robust Ecosystem

Developing a shared purpose and creating alignment drives asset management program support. It then guides the conversation toward larger impacts — beyond day-to-day maintenance, renewal decisions and achieving state of good repair.

There are five key elements to building a robust asset management organizational ecosystem that can garner wide support and deliver more impactful results through a Future Ready™ approach:

- **Establish a strategic foundation** through an asset management program statement, policy, charter and roles/responsibilities matrix that build strong linkages to wider organizational priorities.
- Promote an internal and external **communication strategy** to create awareness and understanding and assign champions who are committed to building stakeholder support.
- Develop a **tactical implementation plan** with clear activities, objectives and quantified benefits. Include quick wins that can generate support for longer-term initiatives.
- **Measure performance** through clear and insightful metrics with real-time dashboards that monitor trends with the capability of quickly altering strategies when targets are lagging.
- Create a **culture of feedback, innovation and improvement** through cross-functional work teams that are empowered, funded and supported by management and senior leadership.

Deploy a Comprehensive Communication Strategy

A comprehensive asset management communication strategy is important to engage stakeholders across departments and ensure that all staff are aware of the impact that asset management has on their mission, day-to-day work and decision making.

Organizations must tackle both internal and external communications strategies in parallel.

Internal communications strategies include:

- e-newsletters, updates or posters;
- town halls and local Q&A sessions with staff; and
- executive briefings – either in-person sessions or video presentations.

External communications strategies include:

- annual reports and asset management plans,
- educational websites and informational videos, and
- project-level neighborhood and public outreach.

Asset management messaging should convey the importance of promoting not only investments related to “new and shiny things” but projects that focus on the foundational state of good repair and optimizing performance of existing assets. The key is having the right balance, securing dedicated consistent funding, and educating elected officials and the public.

WSP USA recently worked with several agencies, including the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA), to create impactful asset management plans, reports and updates that enhance public and stakeholder support and understanding. These efforts also support increased program funding and awareness.



MDOT SHA is developing and integrating asset management best practices to prioritize the needs of its organization across offices and build a culture of teamwork that empowers it to be even better stewards of Maryland’s resources. WSP’s partnership with the agency generated a comprehensive asset management brochure that communicates the program drivers and benefits to external stakeholders as part of its formal Asset Management Office rollout.

In the opening message of the Asset Management Office rollout, Tim Smith, MDOT SHA administrator, states, “Asset management is a long-term commitment, and our team is committed to embracing proactive strategies that employ data-driven decisions, apply lifecycle cost analysis, and deliver prioritized investment decisions to cost-effectively meet our service-level goals and commitments.”



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WSP helped the Maryland Department of Transportation create the Asset Management informational brochure for the State Highway Administration.

Quick Wins, Clear Benefits

Performance management is a critical element of a successful asset management program. Leadership and staff must understand performance expectations and goals and use

clear information to make decisions and modify strategies as needed.

In fact, WSP is currently working with a major wastewater utility in the western U.S. to develop such strategic and tactical metrics that will support the client’s asset management program.

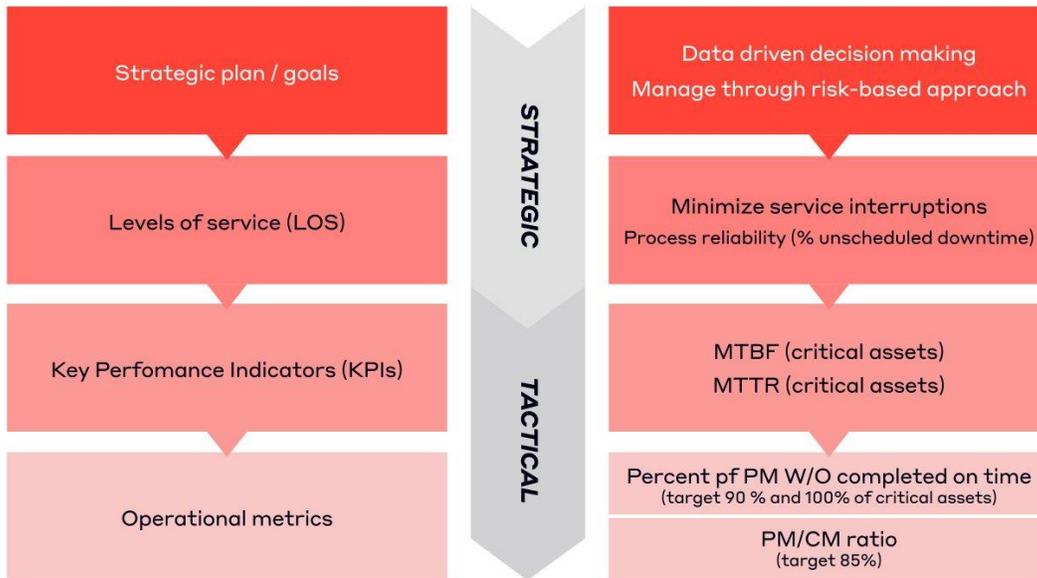
Measures should be diverse and directly related to the organization’s strategic and asset management goals, including reliability, service levels, equity, sustainability and maintenance efficiency. Picking the right measures with a supporting hierarchy of related strategic and tactical measures is an important first step.

Organizations must remember that performance management is a process that involves multiple steps, including developing detailed measure definition sheets, configuring information systems, documenting data collection and validation processes, and designing simple and meaningful reports. All these efforts require commitment.

Measures should be carefully chosen so that they address strategic stakeholder issues as well as tactical operational needs. Ultimately, the performance framework should build trust and transparency and provide the asset management team with a scorecard to measure short-term and long-term progress and benefits.

Organizations should start with a targeted set of high-level metrics that are meaningful for decision makers, and critical measures should be updated in real-time and delivered through interactive dashboards.

Well-developed performance frameworks demonstrate to operations, maintenance and customer service staff how the program makes their job easier and/or more impactful. This approach builds connections and champions at all levels of the organization.



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An example of the Performance Management Hierarchy WSP created for a western U.S. wastewater utility to develop strategic and tactical metrics to support its asset management program.

Collaborate, Refine, Innovate and Improve

Successful asset management programs must constantly evolve and improve with regular cycles of review and refinement. Organizations that fully embrace asset management and commit to collaboration, innovation and continuous improvement discover that these valuable techniques quickly become part of the culture – not just another program.

- **Collaboration** is promoted by embracing leadership committees, asset class work teams and TAMBassadors (what we call our transportation asset management ambassadors) to engage, promote and embrace ongoing improvement initiatives.
- **Program refinements and innovations** are driven by ongoing employee engagement and feedback, and a commitment to continued learning and knowledge transfer through peer-

networking, formal training and certifications.

- **Ongoing improvement** is enabled by a senior leadership commitment to long-term investment, which includes dedicated staffing and funding of new programs with clear and well-documented improvement plans. Program investments are committed and incorporated into formal planning documents including master plans, strategic plans and asset management plans.

Successful programs make asset management a permanent part of day-to-day activities and have fully committed senior leadership, allowing the organization to stay focused, even during times when funding and resources may be constrained.



Author

David Sklar
Assistant Vice President,
Asset Management Water
and Aviation Sector Leader
WSP in the USA



David.Sklar@wsp.com

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