



County Executive Office

2818 S. Bus. Hwy. 281 • Edinburg, Texas 78539 • Phone: (956) 292-7025 • Fax: (956) 292-7034 • www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/budget

*To: Judge J.D. Salinas, County Judge
Precinct #1 Commissioner Sylvia S. Handy
Precinct #2 Commissioner Hector "Tito" Palacios
Precinct #3 Commissioner Joe M. Flores
Precinct #4 Commissioner Oscar Garza*

CC: SAFEGuard Committee

From: Valde Guerra, Commissioners' Court Executive Officer

Date: Monday, June 1, 2009

Re: SAFEGuard Initiative Status Report

The SAFEGuard Committee met on Thursday, May 28, 2009 at 9:30 am in the County Judge's Conference Room. The Committee discussed proposed activities that were recommended since the project's inception.

Attached please find a comprehensive list of proposed activities that were compiled from committee members, County departments, and public input. Please note that some of the activities are already in progress or implemented, and some are not even feasible. The committee will review and examine the feasibility of each recommendation, and establish timelines for the implementation of each activity.

Next Steps

1. Executive Office will compile and summarize all suggestions (from committee members, departments, and public input) on proposed activities and email complete list to Commissioners' Court and SAFEGuard committee members by ~~Friday, May 29, 2009~~. (*Sent on Monday, June 1, 2009*)
2. Committee will meet on **Wednesday, June 3, 2009 at 10:00 am** in the County Judge's Conference Room.
3. Committee will review and examine feasibility of proposed activities, and establish timelines.
4. Report with recommendations will be submitted to Commissioners' Court on June 30, 2009.

The County of Hidalgo Texas
SAFEguard Initiative Proposed Activities

	Activity	Relevant Department/Office	Related Project	Status	Feasible?	Deadline	Notes
1	Conduct study to ensure County-owned buildings are fully utilized.	?		Proposed			Minimize the purchase/lease of new space
2	Closely monitor purchases and construction projects to ensure the County is maximizing on investment.	?		Proposed			
3	Shorten Commissioners' Court agenda by moving more items to consent.	?		Proposed			
4	Implement a paperless Commissioners' Court and encourage the use of laptops and supporting documents	?		Proposed			
5	Set time limits per agenda item	?		Proposed			
6	Establish a system to require approval prior to contacting legal counsel for advice to minimize duplication of efforts(Atlas & Hall/ADA).	?		Proposed			
7	Conduct internal audits along with external audits.	Auditor's Office		Implemented			The County Auditor's Office already conducts internal audits on County departments. Purchasing Department also conducts assets audits. County also has an external audit done annually.
8	Assign an auditor/accountant to each location (Precinct or larger departments), this way you will always have, firsthand knowledge/screening of each project and the delay for payment or additional documents will be eliminated.	Auditor's Office		Proposed			If looking to centralize certain functions (as IT, HR, etc), why would County want to expand Auditor roles into departments?
9	Streamline Auditors & Purchasing procedures to make it easier for departments, including having a calendar for expiring items (i.e., expiring contracts) so service does not lapse.	Auditor's Office, Purchasing		Proposed			SAGE has fields to input/track contract dates.
10	Implement salary caps in every department, for every employee.	Budget	Classification & Compensation Project	Proposed			Classification & Compensation Project should address this.
11	Analyze and review departmental budget requests to ensure budget approval is justifiable.	Budget		Proposed			Example, a department may request funds for Internet when they do not have such an expenditure and/or have not spent funds for that in the last several years.
12	Implement Employee Classification & Compensation Project.	Budget & Management	Classification & Compensation Project	In Progress		September 2009	
13	Develop County Administrative Management Handbook.	Budget & Management		In Progress			
14	Health Insurance – attempt to implement an employee/employer program with employees sharing costs.	Budget & Management (Employee Benefits Division)		Proposed			
15	Implement Selected Applicant Enrollment Process.	Budget & Management, Human Resources, etc.	Selected Applicant Enrollment Policy/Procedure	In Progress		June 2009	
16	Conduct study on vehicle use to identify waste (i.e., sitting idle)	Budget, IT	Vehicles	Proposed			Can implement GPS on vehicles and conduct analysis.
17	Develop and implement a document storage program for District Clerk and reduce expense of outsourcing the service.	District Clerk		Proposed			
18	Conduct departmental personnel audits to ensure that the employee is actually performing what job description entails and that.	Human Resources		Proposed			
19	Consolidate departmental Human Resources positions into centralized HR Department.	Human Resources		Proposed			
20	Reduce departmental expenditures on training by outside consultants (i.e., sexual harassment), and centralize via Human Resources.	Human Resources		Proposed			

The County of Hidalgo Texas
SAFEguard Initiative Proposed Activities

	Activity	Relevant Department/Office	Related Project	Status	Feasible?	Deadline	Notes
21	Assist HR with developing and implementing a training division for general training necessary for all county staff (i.e. Sexual Harassment; Ethics, Etc.)	Human Resources		Proposed			
22	Random drug test all county employees.	Human Resources		Proposed			Courts already ruled that the County cannot drug test all employees. XO can revisit.
23	Conduct criminal and educational background checks on all new hires.	Human Resources		Proposed			Background checks should be made of every selected candidate. HR can obtain a LEXIS NEXIS account.
24	Require more justification from departments to demonstrate need for staffing (i.e., workload analysis data) when creating new positions.	Human Resources		Proposed			
25	Centralize and/or subcontract out certain services (i.e., clerical, custodial), and reassign/retrain affected personnel	Human Resources		Proposed			
26	Ensure employees wages are comparable to duties and responsibilities performed.	Human Resources		Proposed			
27	Consolidate departmental Information Technology positions into a centralized IT Department.	IT		Proposed			
28	Examine an E-government initiative to comprehensively utilize the county website and other technology resources to increase access to and efficiency of government services and resources.	PIO, IT	E-Gov	Proposed			
29	Make a standard contract so not to go through legal all the time.	Purchasing		Proposed			
30	Standardize office furniture as opposed to choices by departments or elected offices	Purchasing		Proposed			
31	Standardize office supplies and further truly consider a long-term supply inventory program for other commodities (i.e. office supplies, preventative maintenance items for HVAC, auto, trucks, etc.)	Purchasing		Proposed			
32	Install and maintain gas pumps for all departments (with fuel budgets) in order to purchase bulk and reduce pump card purchases	Purchasing		Proposed			
33	Eliminate all cell phones except for disaster related events and use pagers.	XO	Cell Phones	Proposed			
34	Limit number of employees that are issued a County cell phone to only those that truly need them to conduct their jobs.	XO	Cell Phones	Proposed			*See Proposed Activity #28
35	Ensure all employees, including department heads, clock in and out all day long.	XO	TAAP	Proposed			
36	Reduce the number of vehicles that are taken home and thus reduce gas consumption.	XO	Vehicles	Proposed			
37	Establish a committee (XO, Budget, Commissioner's representative) to meet with state administrators regarding grant-funded county departments.	XO		Proposed			
38	Reduce travel to events that are necessary to earn CEUs	XO		Proposed			
39	Reduce "training" events (even if local) and encourage only those that serve to maintain certifications, etc.	XO		Proposed			
40	Create an engineering department to handle all road and bridge work as opposed to engaging engineers. This would not eliminate separate engagements for non road and bridge work.	XO		Proposed			
41	Construct a morgue facility and eliminate the need for separate contracts for autopsy facilities, transport of dead bodies, etc.	XO		Proposed			
42	Implement a 1-800 number to report fraud.	XO		Proposed			

The County of Hidalgo Texas
SAFEguard Initiative Proposed Activities

	Activity	Relevant Department/Office	Related Project	Status	Feasible?	Deadline	Notes
43	Impose a 90-day freeze on hiring.	XO, Human Resources		In Progress			Statute states County cannot freeze elected officials' hiring of new employees.
44	Expand Time and Attendance Program to ensure ALL county departments & elected offices are participating.	XO, IT	TAAP	Proposed			
45	Develop and Implement a countywide Time and Attendance Policy	XO, IT	TAAP	Proposed			
46	Eliminate departmental timekeepers' ability to modify time punches, and instead have employees complete and submit a form signed by their supervisor approving modification.	XO, IT	TAAP	Proposed			