

**HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**

600 West Fourth Street  
Davenport, Iowa 52801-1030

Ph: (563) 326-8767 Fax: (563) 328-3285  
www.scottcountyiowa.com



---

Date: May 26, 2015  
To: Board of Supervisors  
From: Mary J. Thee, Human Resources Director/Asst. County Administrator  
Subject: Recorder's Office - Lean Study

In October, 2014 a Clerk II position became vacant in the Recorder's office. After discussion regarding staffing needs the Recorder's office agreed to hire a staffing consultant to review the current workload. Human Resources interviewed several organizations and presented finalists to the Recorder. A decision was made to hire Charnitz Consulting. The department activities were observed, documents were reviewed, and staff interviewed. In conclusion several recommendations were made to lean the departmental processes. The final report is attached for your review. The recommendation is to proceed with Option I, which is to replace the full-time Clerk II with a part-time Clerk II. The salary savings would be \$14,653, or \$33,972 with a full benefit package.

Cc: Dee Bruemmer, County Administrator  
Rita Vargas, County Recorder

# Next Level - Strategy & Structure

## Recommendations on Organizational Staffing and Best Practice Review - Scott County Recorder's Office



This project incorporated:

Understanding of current processing and productivity for Recorder's Office responsibilities. Mapping processes for significant functions and transactions.

Exploration and analysis of alternative paths and methods to achieve continued excellence in delivering Recorder's Office responsibilities

Recommendation on organizational structure and work processes for both status-quo and alternative best practices

### Overview of the Project

The quality of this review reflects the co-operation and assistance of the Recorder and her staff. After spending over 25 hours in the office observing customer services, interviewing all team members, preparing and adjusting process maps for significant processes with all team members, analyzing collected data and continued progress updates with the Recorder and her leadership team... the recommendations in this report reflect thoughtful consideration of options to serve Scott County efficiently and effectively.

As in many customer service organizations, the balancing act between meeting expectations and doing so in a cost-effective manner is the key. Add in the realities of working within state mandates, departmental differences within the state and continued efforts to meet digital demands it comes as no surprise that innovation is only reached with openness, effort and persistence.

The following material was reviewed during this study:

- FY12-FY14 Budget/Volume Records for the Office
- Salary/Wage Scales for applicable positions
- Sick Leave Usage Data
- Phone Records (July 14 - Dec 14)
- Detailed Transaction Reports

- Current Job Descriptions
- Current Organizational Chart
- Office Manuals depicting detailed procedures for each significant function
- Samples of relevant applications for records/transactions
- Federal Passport process manual
- Cross-Training and Back-up Assignment Charts for the Office
- Current Scott County Budget Outcome Measures
- Passport Offerings in Comparable Counties

**Key Assumptions and Data Used in Examining Current State and Alternatives:**

Total Hours of Available Staff Time: Total Hours available assumed 2080 hours per staff member and 25% of Office Holder in performing the bulk of transactions/administration. Those hours were then reduced by lunch/breaks, vacation time, historical sick leave usage and holidays. The study of the status quo assumed 10 staff members and the Recorder. The study of alternatives assume 9 staff members and the Recorder, leaving the current vacant Clerk II position unfilled.

Total Hours available under the “status quo of 10 staff, no process improvement, and the Office Holder equal 14,797 hours.

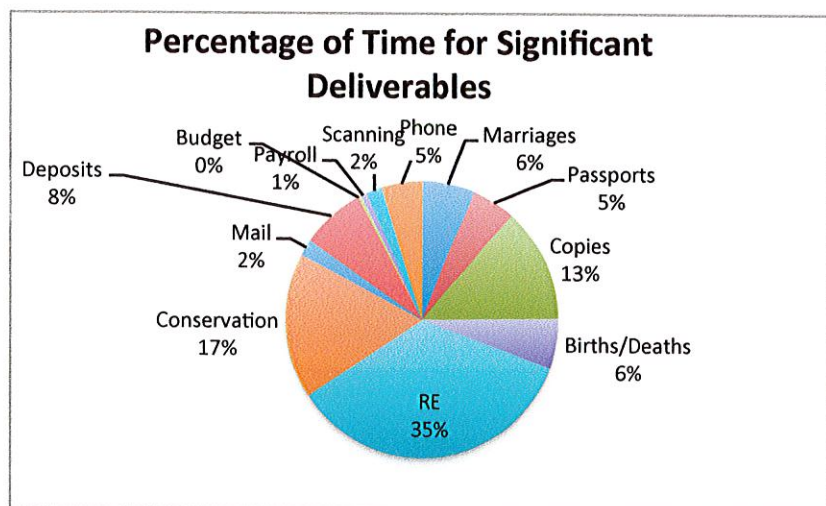
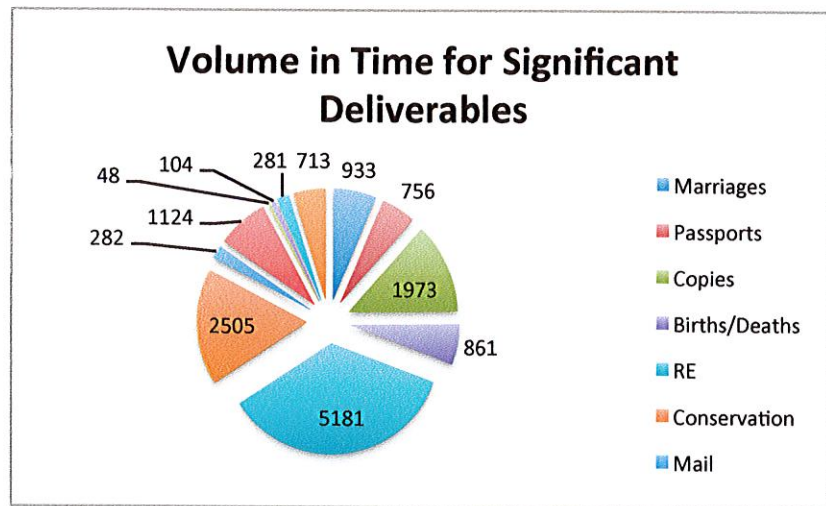
Total Hours available under the alternative of 9 staff, no process improvement and the Office Holder equal 13,263 hours annually. (See graphs and further narrative on pages 5 & 6)

All significant transactions and functions were then assigned an amount of time to complete the process. The “Total Hours Needed” were assumed to be average transactions, not exceptional transactions which occurred less frequently but may require longer time to complete. Observations of service in the highest time consuming transactions (ie. marriage and passports) confirmed staff assumptions. Observations of other processes confirm staff assumptions in estimated time assigned to

**Exploration and analysis of alternatives:**

Alternatives outlined in this recommendation were only considered if they helped the department achieve the same or better outcomes in time, materials, efficiency, accuracy, efficiency, etc., with a similar or lower budget.

Some alternatives which have been discussed/entertained may not be feasible or may require additional research to capture efficiencies in lower staff time devoted to processing current transactions.



**Status Quo Volume vs. Available Staff Hours (10 staff + Recorder, assuming filling a full-time Clerk II and no process adjustments:**

Currently staff hours available, assuming the vacant position is filled total: 14797

Currently, using a three year average of transaction volume (FY 12-14), phone volume, administrative functions and management functions the hours necessary total:

14760

Surplus without Adjustments: 37 hours

**Volume vs. Available Staff Hours (9 staff + Recorder) and implementing alternatives**

Currently staff hours available, assuming the vacant position is not filled total: 13263 hours

Currently, using a three year average of transaction volume (FY 12-14), phone volume, administrative functions and management functions the hours necessary total:

14760 hours

Deficit without Adjustments: -1497 hours

Adjustments in Processes: 1071 hours

Deficit with Adjustments: -426 hours



**Recommendations on feasible, immediate process changes/alternatives to reduce time to deliver current average volume**

Reviewing current processes, the study paid close attention to the following in discovering barriers to efficiency:

- Backlogs
- Waiting Time
- Overproducing
- Defects/Errors/Missing Information
- Excess Motion/Trips
- Complexity

In addition, the study paid attention to utilization of skill sets/staffing, management/administration and norms within and outside the Office in the following areas:

- Average phone calls
- Sick leave usage
- Cross-training and back-up practices
- Self-imposed turn-around targets for completing transactions (in unregulated areas)

The majority of suggestions in process changes that capture approximately 1071 hours, focus on Overproducing, Missing Information, Complexity, and Waiting Times. (See Attachment A)

Process Changes Suggested Include:

- Elimination of waiting time in Real Estate
- Having customer complete conservation applications; Removing unnecessary step of verification in recording births
- Changing marriage application process to reduce excess motion/trips
- Addressing excess motion by adding printer capabilities
- Reducing excess motion by relocating photo back-drop for passports;

Management/Administrative Suggestions Include:

- Examining sick leave usage for potential causality to address the significantly higher norm in the Office
- Examining norms in phone traffic and addressing uneven workload/calls, using technology to distribute calls

Areas not included in Recommendations but Bear Further Exploration Include:

- Eliminating over processing by examining quality control measures and audits in Real Estate which can be reduced, without sacrificing risk management or customer service. While the state is often the last measure of quality in other departments, the County is the last measure in real estate. While the State does maintain other records housed and recorded at the County, exploration of this area of quality control is not focused on removing our responsibility to our taxpayers, but ensuring prudent use of quality checks in all actions, with limited resources. (Currently estimated verification of each real estate document represents 5% of the total hours or approximately 250 staff hours.)
- Eliminating over processing of receipts - objections are focused on a lack of options at this time due to state-mandated software for vital records, which include deaths at this time. In April of 2014, the State Department of Public Health implemented the first phase of e-recording in a system

called Iowa's Vital Events System (IVES). The remainder of vital records, marriages and births, remain on the current software from COTT Systems, Inc, referred to in the Office as COTT, which the Office uses to reconcile fees, track transactions and index vital records documents and land records. Should the state adjust the software to ensure accuracy in recording fees which the County collects could reduce double entry and extra time balancing deposits. However, it is unclear whether the State will further implement the software in births and marriages in the near future. (Currently estimated staff time in double-entry and balancing using two systems in Vital Records represents about 500 staff hours.) As the County implements additional digital tools in the ERP project, it is recommended the Office, the IT team and financial team work closely together on the continued evolution of state directed digital records or e-submissions.

- Eliminating excess time and materials in processing Real Estate transactions - Increasing the use of electronic submissions of real estate transactions would result in savings in staff time and materials. (Currently a modest increase in electronic submission (10%) would reduce staff time by 427 hours.)

The additional suggestions above may not be feasible or may not be immediate options for the Office. However, understanding the conditions under which those suggestions could be successful would be helpful in future continued process improvements. Eliminating any level of verifications in Real Estate, or verifying logical percentages of transactions may seem logical, but a review by the County and Office are required before making any changes in verifications. Quality control and prudent risk management when viewing any alternatives are key. Increasing electronic submissions may require marketing and partnering with local customers to achieve and advocacy on the part of the County and the Office to use technology to meet the highest fiscal responsibilities to users, in terms of staffing. Dual systems in Vital Records are certainly time-consuming and frustrating. However, the Office currently uses four separate software systems to conduct it's business. Unless all vital records transactions end up in the new system, it's likely they will continue to use five systems to ensure



accuracy in fees collected and deducted from the County, but could reduce double-entry. The Office should involve IT team members in state-wide adjustments of the current system to at least eliminate double receipts. It's understood that the Iowa Department of Health is currently working with all Recorders to adjust the accuracy of the system and it's reporting capabilities, which is imperative when they add ACH capabilities/mandates.

**Additional Considerations/Observations: (Attachment B)**

During the study, the Office was acutely concerned about staffing during foreseen/unforeseen absences. As a highly tenured team, vacation time for the entire Office, including the unfilled position totals 1480 hours. That is equivalent to a part-time position in earned time off. Add the sick leave, which is much higher than Departmental averages in the County, peak periods are less manageable. Process changes suggested above can improve the ability to manage these realities but additional suggestions are found in Attachment B, which focus on changes in prioritization of work, assignment of work, examining causes of absenteeism, training and alternatives to permanent hires.

A detailed analysis of the passport process, costs and revenues revealed that processing passports does not result in a net drain on County resources. However, it is noted that this is not a mandated duty of the Office. The County could actually increase fees on photos taken for passport purposes and generate a modest amount of offsetting revenue. Of our comparable counties, only 4 process passports. Three of the four also take photos, as we do. The average fee for photos is \$11.66 (See Attachment B & C)

Slight changes in processing expectations by the Office would provide necessary cushions to peak periods. Currently the Office holds itself to processing all transactions within 24 hours. With two exceptions, most transactions do not need to be finished within that timeframe. When faced with unforeseen staff absences on top of approved absences, a cushion in processing would provide options for assignment of staff.

Staff are fairly well-cross trained. The Office also utilizes detailed process manuals when conducting such training. Additional training in Real Estate to have coverage in Vital Records and cross-training between the Deputy and Office

Manager would provide better alternatives for unforeseen absences as well.

While it may be initially rebuffed as something that isn't the norm at the County. Hiring a temporary employee during foreseen peak periods (historical transactions logs pinpoint when those happen) to scan documents relieves hours for County staff to perform higher-level functions.

**Recommendations:**

The County and the Office are exploring the best way to staff for today and tomorrow. Option I allows some transition to what in all probability will be a leaner organization after longer-tenured staff depart, further continued process improvements are implemented and the County and State continue to make digital and e-submission more cost effective to allow for lower use of labor resources. However, options II and III certainly should be discussed within the balance of fiscal prudence, acceptable service levels and staff work environment.

Option I:

Implement suggested process changes, explore additional process alternatives and make changes in prioritization and management of work and hire a part-time (.50 FTE or less) Clerk II. The level of hours will be a function of recruitment feasibility, foreseen scheduling/utilization of those hours on a daily/weekly basis and should be discussed with HR and the Office as the job assignment within the Office hours are established.

The gap in hours between that needed for the Office volume and that provided by the current team, without filling the full-time position and implementing recommendations is 426 hours. A part-time position yields 838 hours of available time. The excess provides some cushion for continued cross-training and may allow redistribution of duties if/when the Office experiences management vacancies and may provide additional coverage during peak periods until the completion of staff tenure changes and therefore adjusts available hours for the entire team.

Option II:

Eliminate or restrict staffing and hours for passport processing, adopt immediate process improvements and eliminate the vacant Clerk II.

Option III:

Eliminate the vacant Clerk II, adopt immediate process improvements and suggestions and work to implement one or more of the additional improvements over time.

If management level positions open in the future it would be highly recommended that the County and Office consider replacing a vacancy in one of the management positions with a different level of staff after careful attention to job duties between current Operations Manager and Deputy. The current incumbent in one of the management positions possesses institutional knowledge yet to be captured and shared. The highest demand on hours in current volume are transactional in nature, rather than administrative or management level functions. The organizational structure of staff at that time should be examined to further capitalize on staff skill sets, incorporate further changes that happen in the interim with mandated services, process improvements and the e-services focus at the County.

# IMMEDIATE Process Improvement Potentials

## Immediate and Highly Feasible

### ACTION ITEM & CALCULATION

### HOURS SAVED

Print screen to verify marriage license accuracy	1400	0.17	
		233	233

Lower phone traffic		save 200 per year	200
---------------------	--	-------------------	-----

Address sick leave		Reduce from .85% use to 60% use	234
--------------------	--	---------------------------------	-----

Stop last verify in births eliminate 50% of 4540 =		2270	
(birth/death = 2270*(2/60)		76	76

Consv customer complete App 10 minutes x (8221+6811)/2			
Total Conservation Transactions Divided by 2	15032	7516	
Consv*10 min	7516 * (10/60)	0.17	
Volume of 7516*10 minutes		1253	
Minutes/60 = Hours		21	20

Add printer drawer for Legal size to reduce military record copy time to reduce time to copy			28
*Only feasible if this is less than \$630.00 (labor costs reduced)			

Waiting time RE Captured		1 hour day	
		291-10=280 280 days	281

TOTAL Potential Savings in hours annually			1072
---	--	--	------

## Attachment B

### ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

#### PRIORITIES

1) A change could serve to push customers to less costly processing digitally for the County, especially in Real Estate.

Current: Counter, Mail, Digital

Potential: Counter, Digital Mail

#### SCHEDULING

2) Consider adjusting 24 hour turn-around on some transactions that do not require that level of turn-around. This would provide some buffer to meet peak periods, uncontrollable or unplanned absences and allow better management/assignment of staff.

#### STAFFING

3) During peak periods such as June/July/Aug should office reduce number of staff that can be off in specific jobs?

#### CROSS- TRAINING

4) Can any scanning be accomplished during peak periods With temporary to alleviate workloads in peak periods.

5) One staff member is not currently cross-trained. To allow more flexibility in assignment, especially with restrictive assignment in passports, this person should be cross-trained in Vital Records.

6) Succession planning - knowledge of exceptional, rare and odd items. Currently the Deputy handles such items in Real Estate and Vital Records which likely are not captured in detailed manuals as are the more frequent Transactions in the office. The Office Manager or other staff member(s) should be cross-trained. A checklist or resource list should be developed for those tasks and functions with a detailed process manual.

# Break Even Analysis Passport Processing

Attachment C

Break Even Analysis	ITEM	Cost		
	Postage	\$618		
	* Facility/Labor	\$330		
	Training	\$118		
	Audit	\$78		
	Sherlyn Time	\$351		
	Others Time	\$404		
		\$1,899	Volume	60
				(Transactions)
Volume x\$.25.00				
Fee	\$1,500			
85% of Volume				
*\$8.00	\$408			
Total Revenue		\$1,908		

Actual Volume FY14				
	ITEM	Cost		
	Postage	\$630		
	Facility/Labor	\$330		
	Training	\$118		
	Audit	\$78		
	Sherlyn Time	\$7,599		390
	Others Time	\$8,763		910
<b>Total Trans Costs</b>		<b>\$17,518</b>	Volume	<b>1300</b>
<b>Total Admin Costs</b>		<b>\$13,176</b>	FY14	<b>(Transactions)</b>
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>		<b>\$30,694</b>		
\$25.00 * Volume	\$32,500			
\$8.00*(.85*Volume)	\$8,840			
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>\$41,340</b>		

## Additional Process Improvement Potentials

Research Needed or Longer Implementation Horizon

ACTION ITEM & CALCULATION		HOURS SAVED	
Increase E Sub Use by 10%			427
Increase E Sub Use by 20%		572	
This would require advertisement, focus groups with users to determine feasibility. Relying on state only has not been successful.			
<b>Double entry Cott/Ives</b>			
Average Transaction Volume			
B/D	4540		
Marriages	1400		
<u>Total</u>	<u>5940</u>		
=Total*2			
minutes	11880		
= minutes/60	198		200
<b>Balancing COT and IVES</b>			
Hours	281		
20 minutes	0.33		
=Hours*days	94		
= minutes*			
4 people	375		
Estimate:	300 hours per year	300	300
<b>Automate Dov notice</b>			
	=8 minutes per day*281		
to Assessor's	days	37	40
<b>Add printer to reduce VOIDS</b>			
Voids	97 /	5 minutes =	19
Only feasible if printer is less than \$474.00 (labor costs reduced)			
<b>TOTAL Potential Savings in hours annually</b>			<b>559.4</b>