AC Decision Support Framework

What is the Decision Support Framework?

A structured guide to deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and foster strategic alignment in decision-making. This framework is meant to strengthen culture and decision-making capacity, not create more paperwork.

Use it to guide what matters—and make your thinking transparent. It supports the county in the development of a thinking discipline to guide and shape comprehensive discussions when decisions are needed. This is a lens, not a scorecard.

Purpose

This framework helps Arapahoe County institutionalize values-based, transparent decision-making. It is intended to assess strategies, initiatives, or decisions based on the County's Mission, Vision, and six strategic lenses (Sustainability, Data Informed, Community Engagement, Collaboration, Financial Implications, and Equity). In particular it intends to:

Strengthen County operations and decision-making alignment with County strategic plan.
Foster thoughtful discussion.
Improve consistency and clarity in board-facing proposals.
Serve as a thinking tool, not a mandatory pass/fail checklist.
Cultivate analysis habits, not be a burdensome exercise.

When to Use the Framework

This tool is not required for every operational decision. It will be used:

When preparing Board Summary Reports.
  Not for drop-ins or third party presentations.
When presenting initiatives, policy shifts, capital investments, or new programs for BOCC consideration.
As a training tool for strategic thinking across leadership.

How to Use the Framework

Review the statements in each section (6 strategic lenses + mission/vision). Hover over links for additional guidance and/or definitions.
Mark alignment*:
  High – Strong alignment with criteria
  Medium – Moderate alignment
  Low – Weak alignment
  No – Misaligned
  N/A – Not applicable-provide justification in notes
Use the Notes section for short explanations (2-3 sentences maximum), if necessary. (Examples: "One-time cost from ARPA," "Limited engagement due to timeline.") Notes should be used to explain how or why it aligns, or doesn't align.

Do not overthink alignment. Honest responses (including "low" or "no") are valuable to the discussion. Tradeoffs and imperfection are part of the process. The Notes are where the insight lives.

Name and Title

Michele Frishman, Grants and Acquisitions Manager

Department, Office, and/or Division

Open Spaces

Issue/Initiative for Discussion

Joint Project Request from City of Aurora for Triple Creek Trailhead Site Improvements

Short Description of Issue/Initiative

Funding request to support the design and construction of site improvements at the Triple Creek Trailhead in Aurora

Tips:
Hover your mouse over the links for more information.
Use the Notes field to describe the "why"—even if it seems obvious.
There are 6 categories, each with mulitple questions.
Note there is a "Save and Continue Later" option at the bottom right of each page.

Mission & Vision Alignment

Vision: Initiative enhances quality of life through exceptional, responsible public service.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

This project would improve an existing trailhead along three trail corridors to invite more use by the public, based on community input

Mission: Initiative contributes to a diverse and vibrant county where everyone can thrive.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

Improving the Triple Creek Trailhead will provide more opportunities for public recreation in an underserved community of Aurora

Sustainability
We analyze county activities through the lens of human, environmental, social, and economic sustainability, so our decisions lead the county toward meeting the needs of today while empowering current and future generations to thrive.

Hollistic. Initiative promotes long-term financial (including one-time and ongoing cost considerations), human, environmental, and social sustainability.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria					X

Notes

Enduring. The initiative builds lasting, resilient systems rather than offering temporary fixes.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria					X

Notes

Established. The systems and infrastructure are in place to support sustainability over time.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria					X

Notes

Established. The people and culture are in place to support sustainability over time.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The project is supported and will be maintained by the City of Aurora and High Line Canal Conservancy

Data Informed

We use varied data informed and evidence-based best and promising practice tools to inform how best to utilize resources to address challenges.

Quality. Initiative is supported by accurate, relevant, and timely data.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

This project was developed based on input from the local community

Accuracy. Data is interpreted and validated by appropriately qualified professionals.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

Open Spaces staff, OSTAB members, City of Aurora staff, and High Line Canal Conservancy staff are qualified to interpret the public feedback encouraging this project

Application. Data is used to guide decisions rather than simply justify them.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

This project was developed based on input from the local community

Community Engagement

We want to understand and respond to [community values](#) in decision-making, meeting people where they are.

Inclusive. Specific communities affected by the initiative have been engaged, as appropriate, and in accessible ways.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

This project was developed based on input from the local community

Open. We are transparent in sharing what we're doing and why, in a meaningful way.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

This project proposal was presented in a public OSTAB meeting, and OSTAB voted to recommend the requested funding

Responsive. Community input and feedback has been considered and reflected, where appropriate, based on genuine understanding.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

This project was developed based on input from the local community

Collaboration

We work within and across the county to implement outcomes, engaging key [internal and external partners](#) to maximize benefits and increase efficiency.

Strategic. Key partners have been identified and intentionally engaged in a [timely manner](#) to maximize benefit and increase efficiency.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

This project is the result of a partnership between the City of Aurora and the High Line Canal Conservancy

Participatory. Collaboration is transparent, inclusive, and responsive to both internal and external [stakeholders](#).

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The City of Aurora and the High Line Canal Conservancy have conducted transparent, public outreach for the design and master plan of the site

Defined. County's role is clearly defined as lead, support, or defer.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The County would be in a support role as a funder of the project

Financial Implications

We consider long-term and holistic financial implications in decision-making, prioritizing best overall value, responsible use of public funds, and sustainable financial health.

Prudent. Short- and long-term costs are understood, affordable, and balanced with current available resources (including non-monetary assets like equipment or facilities.)

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The cost to the County is limited to a one-time contribution of High Line Canal Working Group funds to support the project, out of the current working group pledge

Efficient. The initiative includes cost-saving measures, external funding, or partnerships where appropriate, and prioritizes best overall value.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

This project was developed in partnership between the City of Aurora and the High Line Canal Conservancy, with additional funding provided by Great Outdoors Colorado

Accountable. Public funds are used responsibly, with trade-offs and non-monetary impacts clearly considered.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The cost to the County is limited to a one-time contribution of High Line Canal Working Group funds to support the project, out of the current working group pledge

Disciplined. One-time and ongoing financial commitments are identified, justified, and planned for in alignment with long-term fiscal health.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The cost to the County is limited to a one-time contribution of High Line Canal Working Group funds to support the project, out of the current working group pledge

Equity

We work with communities impacted by county policies, behaviors, beliefs, practices, and decisions. We seek their voice, consider historical context, and understand intersectional impacts. We anticipate potential obstacles, consider unintended consequences, and work to remove barriers for the betterment of all.

Precautionary. Benefits, challenges, and impacts are understood and addressed, with care taken to avoid unintended harm.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

This project is intended to benefit an underserved community in Aurora

Equitable. The initiative acknowledges and addresses both historical and current [inequities](#).

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

This project is intended to benefit an underserved community in Aurora

Adaptive. The approach is [flexible](#) and inclusive, removing barriers and meeting diverse needs.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

This project is intended to benefit an underserved community in Aurora and is based on local residents' input