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### State Planning Offices

This report presents case studies of state planning offices in Colorado, Massachusetts, and Minnesota in response to a proposal to modernize and revive the former Vermont State Planning Office. The proposed Vermont office has many goals, including: the prioritization of areas of investment into Vermont's economy and people, aligned with climate goals and environmental sustainability; community engagement, equity, and language access in government operations; long-term emergency and disaster preparedness and recovery; standardized data collection and management; and, intergovernmental communications and coordination.

### State Planning in Vermont

#### *History*

State planning in Vermont began in 1963 with the Central Planning Office, established by then-Governor Philip Hoff.<sup>1</sup> By 1991, it transitioned into the Office of Political Research and Coordination (OPRC). At this point, the OPRC included a commissioner, who was appointed by the governor, two staffers, and a receptionist.<sup>2</sup> The office's budget was continually cut until it was eliminated in the late 1990s.<sup>3</sup> In an interview with the authors, Commissioner Post said the main issues the office faced were a lack of staff, its lack of attention from the governor, and lack of planning implementation efforts.<sup>4</sup>

#### *What Organizations Exist Today*

A variety of governmental and nongovernmental organizations currently perform the functions of the proposed planning office.

**Agency of Administration:** Strategic planning and continuous improvement are functions of the Agency of Administration. The governor, once elected, lays out three to five planning

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Post, discussion with authors, March 9, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Post, discussion with authors, March 9, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Post, discussion with authors, March 9, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Post, discussion with authors, March 9, 2021.

priorities.<sup>5</sup> Each agency then composes their own strategic plan to move the needle on the governor's larger goals, and these strategies are compiled to form the master plan.<sup>6</sup> The goals are operationalized and measurable so they can be tracked.<sup>7</sup> Susan Zeller, the Chief Performance Officer in the Agency of Administration, emphasizes that planning needs to be a collaboration, and communication is essential when departments have conflicting approaches to the governor's goals.<sup>8</sup> Having worked under three governors of varying political affiliations, she believes that coordination is strongest under the current administration because of the weekly cabinet meetings held by the governor.<sup>9</sup> According to her, familiarity breeds cooperation.<sup>10</sup>

**Agency of Commerce and Community Development:** The Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) fulfills some planning roles, with a focus on community planning and economic development.<sup>11</sup> The ACCD houses the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Department of Economic Development. Within the ACCD, there are a variety of programs related to housing, community development, economic development, disaster planning, historic preservation, and tourism and marketing.<sup>12</sup> Vermont also has Regional Development Corporations (RDCs), which serve as 'satellites' of the Department of Economic Development, providing economic development assistance and engaging in more localized business and financial services.<sup>13</sup> The Regional Development Corporations receive administrative funding from the Department of Economic Development.<sup>14</sup>

**Department of Environmental Conservation:** The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is responsible for a variety of duties, such as issuing environmental permits, hazardous waste management, and data collection.<sup>15</sup> The DEC engages in planning by "establishing strategic priorities aimed at achieving various milestones and improving related outcomes."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Susan Zeller, discussion with authors, April 1, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Susan Zeller, discussion with authors, April 1, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Susan Zeller, discussion with authors, April 1, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Susan Zeller, discussion with authors, April 1, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Zeller, discussion with authors, April 1, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Susan Zeller, discussion with authors, April 1, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Agency of Commerce and Community Development, State of Vermont, accessed April 2, 2021, <https://accd.vermont.gov/about-us>.

<sup>12</sup> Agency of Commerce and Community Development, State of Vermont, accessed March 31, 2021, <https://accd.vermont.gov/>.

<sup>13</sup> Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Regional Development Corporations, State of Vermont, accessed March 29, 2021, <https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/resources/rdc>.

<sup>14</sup> Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Regional Development Corporations, State of Vermont, accessed April 2, 2021, <https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/resources/rdc>.

<sup>15</sup> Department of Environmental Conservation, State of Vermont, accessed April 2, 2021, <https://dec.vermont.gov/about-dec>.

<sup>16</sup> Department of Environmental Conservation, Environmental Conservation Planning, State of Vermont, <https://dec.vermont.gov/commissioners-office/planning>.

The DEC also partners with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to establish strategic priorities and receive federal funding. This agreement is re-drafted every three to four years.<sup>17</sup>

**Regional Planning Commissions:** Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) are independent planning bodies created by member municipalities, as required by statute.<sup>18</sup> They aim to “Promote economic development...Preserve the natural beauty of Vermont; Obtain and maintain efficiency in government expenditure; [and] Safeguard and extend local autonomy in planning and development decisions.”<sup>19</sup> They engage with a wide range of planning areas, from emergency management to land use to environmental quality to economic development.<sup>20</sup> The RPCs are not controlled by a higher body.<sup>21</sup> There is only an informal mechanism to facilitate cooperation, but deference is given to each region because they are most familiar with the intricacies of their needs.<sup>22</sup>

**Vermont Emergency Management:** Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) has various community preparedness plans on their website outlining plans for businesses, schools, and individuals.<sup>23</sup> They also have local and state plans for emergency management and hazard mitigation. Additionally, they provide training exercises and programs and host emergency preparedness conferences.

**Vermont Data & Geodata Portal:** Vermont Data is the Vermont subset of the federal data site, [data.gov](https://data.gov), that is run by the state. Data is collected by state agencies and then put out as an open data source on the site.<sup>24</sup> The Vermont Open Geodata Portal is similar, though it is administered by the Vermont Center of Geographic Information.<sup>25</sup>

**Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies:** Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA) is a non-profit corporation composed of Vermont’s Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs).<sup>26</sup> Their mission, as mapped out in their bylaws, “is to increase the effectiveness of Vermont’s Regional Planning Commissions, and public and private

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<sup>17</sup>Department of Environmental Conservation, Environmental Conservation Planning, State of Vermont, accessed April 2, 2021, <https://dec.vermont.gov/commissioners-office/planning>.

<sup>18</sup> Susan Zeller, discussion with authors, April 1, 2021; Katz, Josh, “Vermont Regional Planning Commissions at Work 2020,” December 8, 2020, <https://www.vapda.org/>.

<sup>19</sup> “About the WRC,” Windham Regional Commission, January 11, 2021. <http://windhamregional.org/about>.

<sup>20</sup> Katz, “Vermont Regional Planning Commissions at Work 2020.”

<sup>21</sup> Susan Zeller, discussion with authors, April 1, 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Susan Zeller, discussion with authors, April 1, 2021; Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies, “Bylaws,” accessed April 1, 2021, [https://www.vapda.org/uploads/1/3/1/8/131894470/vapda\\_bylaws\\_adopted\\_4-1-21.pdf](https://www.vapda.org/uploads/1/3/1/8/131894470/vapda_bylaws_adopted_4-1-21.pdf), 2.

<sup>23</sup> Vermont Department of Safety, “Vermont Emergency Management,” accessed April 1, 2021 <https://vem.vermont.gov/>.

<sup>24</sup> Data.gov, “Vermont Data,” accessed April 1, 2021, <https://data.vermont.gov/>.

<sup>25</sup> State of Vermont, “Vermont Open Geodata Portal,” accessed April 1, 2021, <https://geodata.vermont.gov/>.

<sup>26</sup> Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies, “Bylaws,” accessed April 1, 2021, [https://www.vapda.org/uploads/1/3/1/8/131894470/vapda\\_bylaws\\_adopted\\_4-1-21.pdf](https://www.vapda.org/uploads/1/3/1/8/131894470/vapda_bylaws_adopted_4-1-21.pdf), 1.

planning by the Municipalities, Regions and the State of Vermont.”<sup>27</sup> To achieve their goal of efficient planning, they help strengthen the capability of municipalities, exchange ideas and information, provide a space for coordination, and provide educational opportunities for those interested in planning from the general public to governmental agencies.<sup>28</sup>

## Colorado

Colorado’s Office of Smart Growth was created in Title 24, Article 32, Part 32 under the Department of Local Affairs during the 1990’s when development was surging.<sup>29</sup> Today, this office exists in statute but has been replaced by the Community Development Office (CDO) in practice.<sup>30</sup> Current CDO Director Andy Hill attributes the replacement of the Office of Smart Growth to their unwanted interference in local affairs.<sup>31</sup> The CDO currently has three core functions: providing funding for local planning, acting as a liaison and advocate for local governments in interactions with the state government, and providing technical assistance and training for local governments during the planning process.<sup>32</sup> The funding is provided for master plans through grants, which have specific criteria attached that give the state some say in planning despite their deference to local governments in these matters.<sup>33</sup> For example, the state will try to achieve specific climate, housing, or economic development goals via these criteria.<sup>34</sup> The latter two functions are derived from their supportive role for local planning, which ensures that local governments have a voice in development. The Office does not track outcomes resulting from their grants.<sup>35</sup> It ensures that the criteria are met and that their policy is followed, but they are lacking in staff to further analyze the effects of their funding.<sup>36</sup>

### *Application to Vermont*

Colorado’s deference to local governments does not align with the proposal for Vermont’s office, which would give state government the planning power; however, it does align with Vermont’s current planning system, where the power resides in Regional Planning Commissions, or RPCs.<sup>37</sup> According to CDO Director Hill, local control can be problematic; however, she believes that local government authority is effective long-term given the state’s

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<sup>27</sup> Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies, “Bylaws.”

<sup>28</sup> Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies, “Bylaws.”

<sup>29</sup> 24 C.G.A § 3201-3204, “Colorado Revised Statutes 2019: Title 24,” retrieved from <https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/images/olls/crs2019-title-24.pdf>; Andy Hill, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Andy Hill, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Andy Hill, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>32</sup> Andy Hill, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Andy Hill, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Andy Hill, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Andy Hill, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>36</sup> Andy Hill, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>37</sup> Katz, “Vermont Regional Planning Commissions at Work 2020.”

distinct regional contexts.<sup>38</sup> In Hill's assessment, each region is best equipped to develop plans and policies for their unique situations.<sup>39</sup> Despite this, she does recognize that state control could be beneficial because of their access to data.<sup>40</sup> If the planning power were to fall to the state, it would have to be flexible to deal with each region or municipality's unique needs.<sup>41</sup>

The proposal for the new Vermont office includes long-term emergency and disaster preparedness and recovery. In Colorado, this function falls within the purview of the Department of Local Affairs, which is where the CDO is located.<sup>42</sup> Using one of the planning office's grants, the Department of Local Affairs composed a hazard mitigation guide to integrate disaster recovery into land-use plans.<sup>43</sup> So although hazard and disaster planning is not one of the main functions of the CDO, it is still involved in this matter.

When it comes to sustainability, Colorado's Community Development Office attaches these criteria to their grants for local planning projects.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, they provide technical assistance and resources for municipalities looking to engage with sustainability planning, which the Office defines as "meeting the needs of your community now while making sure that the future needs of your community are not jeopardized."<sup>45</sup> Not all of Colorado's communities have sustainability plans.<sup>46</sup>

The Colorado Community Development Office currently provides technical assistance for local governments when engaging with the public.<sup>47</sup> It has published guides on their websites, such as "How to Encourage Citizen Involvement" and "Tips on Running Public Hearings."<sup>48</sup> Despite having these resources, Director Andy Hill told us that the CDO is looking to grow public involvement in planning in the future.<sup>49</sup> In addition to growing public involvement, the Office is attempting to incorporate equity and inclusion into their planning, like Vermont's proposal.<sup>50</sup> It currently lacks these types of measures.<sup>51</sup> The Colorado Office also lacks funding analysis, which

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<sup>38</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with, March 17, 2021.

<sup>40</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with, March 17, 2021.

<sup>41</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with, March 17, 2021.

<sup>42</sup> State of Colorado, "Resilience & Hazard Mitigation," Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State of Colorado, accessed April 2, 2021, <https://cdola.colorado.gov/dola/resilience-hazard-mitigation>.

<sup>43</sup> State of Colorado, "Resilience & Hazard Mitigation."

<sup>44</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> State of Colorado, "Sustainability Planning," Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State of Colorado, accessed April 2, 2021, <https://cdola.colorado.gov/sustainability-planning>.

<sup>46</sup> State of Colorado, "Sustainability Planning."

<sup>47</sup> State of Colorado, "Public Involvement," Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State of Colorado, accessed April 2, 2021, <https://cdola.colorado.gov/public-involvement>.

<sup>48</sup> State of Colorado, "Public Involvement."

<sup>49</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>50</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>51</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

the Vermont proposal seeks to engage, but they are looking to expand both this kind of analysis and data collection more generally.<sup>52</sup>

## Massachusetts

Massachusetts has multiple instruments that engage in state planning. These include the Division of Capital and Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs).<sup>53</sup>

The DCAMM, which was created by the Massachusetts legislature in 1980, is an agency within the Executive Office for Administration and Finance. The DCAMM was created in response to a corrupt building department, built from the ground up to be "efficient and transparent."<sup>54</sup> The agency is "responsible for capital planning, major public building construction, facilities management, and real estate services for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."<sup>55</sup> The DCAMM oversees the state's capital assets, totaling 65 million square feet.<sup>56</sup> The office is also responsible for 2-billion-dollars' worth of capital projects. The DCAMM has six different offices, including: the Office of Facilities Management and Maintenance, the Office of Finance and Administration, the Office of General Counsel, the Office of Leasing and State Planning, the Office of Planning, Design, and Construction, and the Office of Real Estate Management.<sup>57</sup>

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are federally required regional transportation policy organizations. They are designed with regional decision making in mind and operate in tandem with the Regional Planning Agencies.<sup>58</sup> MPOs have "co-terminus boundaries with the state-created RPAs."<sup>59</sup> The RPAs are state-created, public organizations, which were designed to serve local governments and citizens by dealing with varying issues such as affordable housing or community development.<sup>60</sup> The RPAs take a holistic approach to planning and tackle multitudes of issues.

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<sup>52</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>53</sup> Division of Capital Asset Management, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, accessed March 31, 2021, <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/division-of-capital-asset-management-and-maintenance>; Regional Planning, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, accessed April 2, 2021, <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/regional-planning>.

<sup>54</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>55</sup> Division of Capital and Asset Management, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, accessed March 29, 2021, <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/about-our-organization>,

<sup>56</sup> Division of Capital and Asset Management, accessed April 3, 2021, <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/about-our-organization>.

<sup>57</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>58</sup> Regional Planning, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/regional-planning>.

<sup>59</sup> Regional Planning, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, accessed April 2, 2021, <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/regional-planning>.

<sup>60</sup> Regional Planning, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, accessed March 31, 2021, <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/regional-planning>.

## *Background*

The DCAMM houses roughly 350 people between its six offices.<sup>61</sup> Facilities Management and Design and Production are the largest offices within the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance. Efficient communication and coordination are necessary to manage projects. The DCAMM also has strong relationships with other offices in the executive branch, with biweekly and monthly meetings with the Office of Human Health Services and the Office of Public Safety, respectively.<sup>62</sup> The DCAMM develops five-year capital plans every year. Due to their incorporation with Executive Office of Administration and Finance (A&F), creating, budgeting, and analyzing these capital plans is efficient.<sup>63</sup> The process is not "incredibly bureaucratic," and the Governor and A&F have the final say.<sup>64</sup>

The DCAMM creates master plan goals. Liz Minnis, Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Planning, emphasized the importance of meshing data with strategic goals.<sup>65</sup> The combination of the two results in effective capital plans, and she stressed the need to think long-term, as the investment is utilized for multiple decades. Tapping the private sector due to their nimbler response to changing needs was also suggested, especially in terms of more short-term capital planning.<sup>66</sup>

## *Application to Vermont*

Due to the DCAMM's strict focus on capital asset management, its applicability to the more holistic planning office suggested for Vermont is narrow. The office also does not work in coordination with any of the Massachusetts's RPAs.<sup>67</sup> The office is also significantly larger in scope than the other offices that have been discussed. Its incorporation within the Office of Administration and Finance is effective in managing budget efficiency, and the DCAMM's focus on transparency from its founding are both aspects that may be beneficial for the state planning agency suggested by legislators.<sup>68</sup>

Outside of that, their focus on environmental impacts is a good practice in effective coordination and effective goal setting. Massachusetts has set a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 85% and achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.<sup>69</sup> All new buildings developed are designed to be zero-net carbon emissions.<sup>70</sup> An energy team housed within the

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<sup>61</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>62</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>63</sup> Division of Capital Asset Management, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, accessed April 2, 2021, <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/about-our-organization>

<sup>64</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>65</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>66</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>67</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>68</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>69</sup> A Decarbonization Roadmap, Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

<sup>70</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

DCAMM analyzes the energy efficiency of other agencies' buildings and calculates investments and potential savings. The goal is to make energy-efficient investments that pay for themselves. The DCAMM doesn't have to count this on their budget cap, as the money saved by these agencies from these investments is utilized for budgeting.<sup>71</sup> The incentives and the outcomes from engaging in these clean-energy investments are apparent and effective, and Liz Minnis estimates around \$30 million a year is saved from this approach.<sup>72</sup> Members from all divisions within the executive branch are also on a climate action committee, which allows for this level of coordination.

## Minnesota

The Minnesota Planning Agency (MPA) was established in 1965 after Governor Wendell Anderson assigned state planning to the agency via executive order. It had two primary functions:

1. Review current programming and future planning of all state departments and agencies, and
2. Report regularly and on or before January 15 of each odd numbered year to the legislature, reviewing in each report the state planning program, and the progress and development thereof.<sup>73</sup>

MPA had three core units: Demography, the Environmental Quality Board (EQB), and the Land Management Information Center (LMIC), which worked with GIS data.<sup>74</sup> Its grants were tied to the Department of Energy and Economic Development.<sup>75</sup>

In 1991, the MPA transitioned into the Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning (SLP) which had the same three core units.<sup>76</sup> Its functions also shifted during this transition. A 1998 financial audit of the office stated that "the office develops an integrated long-range plan for the state, coordinates planning activities among all levels of government, and stimulates public interest to impact the future of the state."<sup>77</sup> To fulfill its functions, the office coordinated with agencies, the legislature, and the commissioner of finance during its existence.<sup>78</sup>

In 2003, these core units remained but became dispersed throughout the state government. Today, the Environmental Quality Board is an independent board, the State Demography Center (SDC) is a part of the Department of Administration, and the Land Management

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<sup>71</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>72</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>73</sup> Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, *Minnesota Agencies - Planning Agency*, September 30, 2015.

<sup>74</sup> Tom Gillaspay, discussion with authors, March 16, 2021.

<sup>75</sup> Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, *Minnesota Agencies - Planning Agency*, September 30, 2015.

<sup>76</sup> Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, *Minnesota Agencies - Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning*, December 17, 2020; Tom Gillaspay, discussion with authors, March 16, 2021.

<sup>77</sup> Office of the Legislative Auditor – Financial Audit Division, *Report Summary: Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning – Financial Related Audit for the Two Fiscal Years Ended June 30, 1997*, No. 98-33, May 22, 1998.

<sup>78</sup> Office of the Legislative Auditor – Financial Audit Division, *Report Summary*, No. 98-33, May 22, 1998.



Information Center is in IT Services as the Geospatial Information Office.<sup>79</sup> Statute 4A.01 assigned the Commissioner of Administration as the state planning officer, who was “responsible for the coordination, development, assessment, and communication of information, performance measures, planning, and policy concerning the state's future.”<sup>80</sup> However, in email correspondence on March 15, 2021, current Commissioner and state planning officer Alice Roberts-Davis said that her office no longer provides the state’s planning functions within the agency and provided no indication as to where the function now lies.<sup>81</sup>

Most recently, Governor Tim Pawlenty created Minnesota’s Office of Continuous Improvement (MNCI) in the late 2000s “to act as the state’s central office of CI” (continuous improvement) for state and local government.<sup>82</sup> Like SDC, MNCI is within the Department of Administration. The office’s goal is “to lead and support efforts that increase the continuous improvement culture, capacity, and results for Minnesota state government agencies and staff.”<sup>83</sup> The office emphasizes coordination, facilitation, and improvement to government processes based on business models to improve the function of governmental offices rather than improving or setting a mission for the state.<sup>84</sup>

One of the only attempts to create a citizen-involved interagency long range plan was Minnesota Milestones.<sup>85</sup> Established in 1991 by Governor Arne Carlson, Minnesota Milestones was a way for citizens to define a shared vision and set, as well as implement, goals that would lead to a better future for the state.<sup>86</sup> The key to this initiative was creating a vision that had goals whose progress could be monitored via data collection.<sup>87</sup> Thus, the required data needed to be collectible, measurable, and useful.<sup>88</sup> Ultimately, Minnesota Milestones set nearly seventy indicators with their first report in 1992.<sup>89</sup> It published subsequent reports in 2002 and 2011.<sup>90</sup> The 2011 report saw the number of indicators drop to sixty. It is unclear if the organization is

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<sup>79</sup> Minnesota Department of Administration, “Minnesota State Demographic Center,” accessed March 19, 2021, <https://mn.gov/admin/demography/>; Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, “Minnesota Environmental Quality Board,” accessed March 21, 2021, <https://www.eqb.state.mn.us/>; Minnesota IT Services, “MnGeo: Minnesota Geospatial Information Office,” accessed March 21, 2021, <https://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/>.

<sup>80</sup> Minnesota Statute 4A.01, 2019; Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, *Minnesota Agencies - Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning*, December 17, 2020.

<sup>81</sup> Alice Roberts-Davis, email message to authors, March 15, 2021.

<sup>82</sup> Minnesota Department of Administration, “Continuous Improvement,” accessed March 15, 2021, <https://mn.gov/admin/government/continuous-improvement/>.

<sup>83</sup> Minnesota Department of Administration, “Continuous Improvement.”

<sup>84</sup> Minnesota Department of Administration, “Continuous Improvement;” Geneva Martin and Cathryn Beil, discussion with authors, March 25, 2021.

<sup>85</sup> Department of Administration, *Toward A Vision Minnesota: Long-Range Strategic Planning Overview and Recommendations*, Tom Gillaspay, October 2010.

<sup>86</sup> Minnesota Planning, *Minnesota Milestones: A Report Card for the Future*, Arnie Anderson, Stephen Coleman, J.H. Fonkert, Charles Kenow, and Sheldon Mains, 1992.

<sup>87</sup> Minnesota Planning, *Minnesota Milestones: A Report Card for the Future*.

<sup>88</sup> Minnesota Planning, *Minnesota Milestones: A Report Card for the Future*.

<sup>89</sup> Minnesota Department of Administration, “Minnesota State Demographic Center.”

<sup>90</sup> Minnesota Department of Administration, “Minnesota State Demographic Center.”

still functioning and will be publishing another report soon, keeping with its ten-year pattern, or if its operations have ceased.<sup>91</sup> There is currently no active website for the initiative.

### *Application to Vermont*

MPA and SLP, with their three core parts and their coordination with the Minnesota State Economist, seem to encapsulate two of the five proposed goals for the prospective modernized and revitalized Vermont Planning Office. Such goals are prioritizing areas of economic and environmentally sustainable investment and standardized data collection.

The key to long run planning is having plans that are feasible and accepted while aligning interdepartmental missions and goals. In 2010, Tom Gillaspay, a now-retired Minnesota State Demographer who worked through the 2003 dissolution of SLP, recommended six cyclical steps to create an effective long-range plan. These steps are as follows.

1. Complete a self-critical in-depth analysis of the area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (a SWOT Analysis).
2. Create a vision statement representative of the population.
3. Have government leaders adapt the vision statement into overarching strategic directions.
4. Have each department develop goals aligned with the vision statement.
5. Periodically check on the overall progress toward the vision and audit previous steps.
6. Revisit the vision and departmental goals based on the audits and incorporate new views.<sup>92</sup>

In their training guide, MNCI also lays out the following phases for improvement.

1. Identify places of potential improvement.
2. Scope out and charter the project.
3. Begin the project.
4. Analyze and assess the current process.
5. Identify quick improvements in the process.
6. Drop recommendations and implementation plans.
7. Implement the project.
8. Sustain the improvements.<sup>93</sup>

In speaking with the office's staff, they noted that even though these steps seem linear, it is not necessarily how it happens during implementation.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Minnesota Department of Administration, "Minnesota State Demographic Center."

<sup>92</sup> Department of Administration, *Toward A Vision Minnesota*, Tom Gillaspay, October 2010.

<sup>93</sup> Department of Administration - Continuous Improvement, *What is the CI Project Process?*, 2021.

<sup>94</sup> Geneva Martin and Cathryn Beil, discussion with authors, March 25, 2021.

The Minnesota office and the former Vermont office have similar histories in that they became underutilized and subsequently underfunded and then unfunded.<sup>95</sup> Tom Gillaspay argues a “successful strategic planning process for Minnesota will require an ongoing commitment of elected and appointed leadership, as well as sufficient dedicated resources to initiate and maintain it.”<sup>96</sup> This rings true for Vermont. The state has seen what happened to the office without commitment from state government but has also seen the benefit of governmental commitment through the governor and Agency of Administration’s Strategic Plan.<sup>97</sup>

The stagnation of Minnesota Milestones also emphasizes the importance of something on which Vermont already seems to have a handle: setting an appropriate number of strategic goals. In a conversation with Vermont Agency of Administration CPO, Susan Zeller, she mentioned that Vermont governors seem to know to choose three to five goals in which to have the departments strive toward progress.<sup>98</sup>

## Takeaways

### *Colorado*

The Colorado Community Development Office finds its strengths in putting local governments first and maintaining the big picture.<sup>99</sup> According to Director Hill, deference to local governments has been key to the office’s survival and the pig picture mentality helps it connect with other agencies and localities.<sup>100</sup> The office is affected by the election of a new governor, but it has been low on governors’ radars compared to other agencies because it tries to avoid conflicts.<sup>101</sup> The most effective way they do this is by attaching strings to their grants, instead of pursuing statutory mandates, so local governments view them as helping, rather than controlling, their efforts.<sup>102</sup> The director is also insulated from the governor.<sup>103</sup> There are three people between the governor and the director, which creates a buffer.<sup>104</sup>

The office has struggled with a lack of staff, which was also a problem for Vermont’s original planning office.<sup>105</sup> Colorado was equipped with only one planner for a long time, roughly 15 years, which has led to a deficit in expertise, forcing the office to rely on grants to employ

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<sup>95</sup> “Tough Economic Times – And No State Planning Agency,” *MinnPost*, September 16, 2009, <https://www.minnpost.com/cityscape/2011/09/tough-economic-times-and-no-state-planning-agency/>.

<sup>96</sup> Department of Administration, *Toward A Vision Minnesota*.

<sup>97</sup> Suzan Zeller, discussion with authors, April 1, 2021.

<sup>98</sup> Susan Zeller, discussion with authors, April 1, 2021.

<sup>99</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>100</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>101</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>102</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>103</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>104</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>105</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021; Bruce Post, discussion with authors, March 9, 2021.

people with technical knowledge to help local planning efforts.<sup>106</sup> Additionally, the Office has been having a difficult time quantifying outcomes and promoting equity and inclusion as they navigate these new objectives.<sup>107</sup>

### *Massachusetts*

While the DCAMM has a strict focus on capital asset management, the organization and integration of the office is applicable. The strong relationships they maintain with other offices allows them to effectively coordinate strategic planning for facilities.<sup>108</sup> It should be noted that due to the nature of the office, the majority of their work is not very politicized. The transparency of the organization is indicative of this and Minnis placed heavy emphasis on the importance of transparency within government operations.<sup>109</sup> Their focus on accommodating the specific needs of different offices and agencies could be applicable to a strategic planning office.

The DCAMM's incorporation within the office of Administration and Finance is effective from a budgeting and coordination standpoint, and Vermont's Office of Administration could allow for similar benefits and coordination for a strategic planning office.<sup>110</sup> Creating five-year capital plans that get updated each year, while time consuming, is an effective approach to consistent planning. Minnis stated that their incorporation within the office of A&F makes this more efficient and assists with cross-agency planning.<sup>111</sup>

### *Minnesota*

Tom Gillaspy, the former State Demographer, is an advocate for a non-partisan planning body that does not answer to the parties or the governor, much like the Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning and Minnesota Planning Agency.<sup>112</sup> He claimed this feature was very beneficial, especially during Independent Governor Jesse Ventura's term from 1999-2003. During Ventura's term, the 2000 Census results came back, and the state legislature began the process of redistricting. Ventura was calling for competitive districts in a partisan sense, while legislators were calling to keep the districts as stagnant and safe as possible. The independent status of the body allowed the office to provide an unbiased solution, though ultimately led to the dissolution of the office's functions in 2003 after the redistricting tensions.<sup>113</sup> Given Vermont's particular political setting with a consistent third-party presence in the legislature, the affiliation of the body should be carefully considered.

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<sup>106</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>107</sup> Andy Hall, discussion with authors, March 17, 2021.

<sup>108</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>109</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>110</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>111</sup> Liz Minnis, discussion with authors, March 31, 2021.

<sup>112</sup> Tom Gillaspy, discussion with authors, March 16, 2021.

<sup>113</sup> Tom Gillaspy, discussion with authors, March 16, 2021.

Gillaspy claimed the office's role in the Census (both promoting it and aiding in redistricting or re-apportioning after the counts come back) was vital, as it gave the office a justified existence. Having a justified existence prevented further budget cuts, which kept the office around longer.<sup>114</sup> Once the office became more politicized after the 2000 Census redistricting, the office began to be scrutinized before finally being dissolved. To be most effective, the long-term goals of the office should be kept in mind. In an interview with MNCI staffers, justifying the office's existence was also a large theme, especially with other government offices and agencies having internal CI teams.<sup>115</sup> MNCI continually evaluates their necessity by looking at their ROI based on their procurements, enterprise sustainability, and grants.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Tom Gillaspay, discussion with authors, March 16, 2021.

<sup>115</sup> Geneva Martin and Cathryn Beil, discussion with authors, March 25, 2021.

<sup>116</sup> Geneva Martin and Cathryn Beil, discussion with authors, March 25, 2021.