FY21-26 STRATEGIC PLAN

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FY2021-FY2026

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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MESSAGE FROM THE *Director*

To our DOC stakeholders and team members,

As we uphold our commitment to fostering a safe, rehabilitative, and supportive environment within the Department of Corrections, we continue to implement and refine our current Strategic Plan. This plan serves as our roadmap, guiding us through challenges while keeping us focused on our mission to enhance public safety and support the rehabilitation and growth of those in our care.

Our approach remains collaborative, data-driven, and responsive to the evolving needs of our system. Input from staff at all levels, community partners, and experts in corrections, mental health, and rehabilitation continues to shape our strategies. Your insights and experiences are essential in ensuring that our efforts align with our collective goals.

The key priorities of our Strategic Plan include:

- **Enhancing Public Safety –** Strengthening systems and practices to protect the communities we serve.
- **Promoting Rehabilitation and Reentry –** Expanding opportunities for individuals to address underlying challenges and prepare for successful reintegration.
- **Staff Development and Support –** Providing the resources, training, and well-being support necessary for our team's success.
- **Operational Efficiency and Innovation –** Optimizing resources and embracing new approaches to corrections.
- **Community and Stakeholder Engagement –** Strengthening partnerships and fostering transparency and collaboration.

Our Strategic Plan is a living document, regularly assessed and updated to reflect changing priorities and emerging challenges. Through ongoing meetings, forums, and feedback opportunities, we will continue engaging with you to ensure that our initiatives remain effective and forward-thinking.

Together, we will build upon our progress, ensuring that the Department of Corrections remains a leader in public safety, rehabilitation, and innovation. Your dedication and commitment are the foundation of our success, and I look forward to working with each of you as we advance our shared goals.

Thank you for your continued service and dedication.

Beth Skinner
Director

EXECUTIVE *Summary*

The Iowa Department of Corrections has developed a comprehensive strategic plan to elevate the state from having a well-established correctional system to becoming a national model of excellence in corrections. This ambitious plan focuses on five essential priorities and five targeted areas for improvement. These priorities and areas will be defined in a way that is both actionable and measurable, ensuring all staff members understand how their contributions align with the department's broader objectives.

By prioritizing these focus areas, the department aims to increase the Reentry Success Rate (RSR) over the next five years. This progress will not only strengthen public safety but will also propel Iowa's RSR ranking from 25th to among the top 10 states nationwide.

How We Will Use This Plan

The purpose and goal of this plan is to establish clear focus and direction. This plan will serve as the framework to deliver on the mission and vision of the DOC. Below are examples of this plan in action:

- Set Priorities for New Initiatives
- Connect Our Team's Work to Our Strategic Priorities
- Reflect and Embed Our Strategic Priorities in Our Communications
- Guide Our Day to Day Collaboration and Culture

MISSION, VISION, & *Guiding Principles*

OUR MISSION

Creating Opportunities for Safer Communities

OUR VISION

An Iowa with no more victims

OUR VALUES

- *An aligned department that utilizes evolving technology and performance-based measurement to ensure equitable justice and accountability, providing a seamless continuation of services beginning with incarceration through reentry.*
- *A standardized use of evidence-based practices across the State, to assess client risk and needs, and provide the appropriate level of supervision and treatment.*
- *An empowered team of professionals, working together towards the common vision of improved treatment services for offenders, reducing recidivism and increasing safety within our communities.*
- *A safe, inclusive, and accountable environment where the DOC Team consistently deliver equitable services, hold each other accountable, and support one another through focus oin mental and physical well being.*
- *A collaborative culture that attracts and retains the best and brightest for DOC's future.*

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Operational Efficiency, Transparency, Accountability and Fiscal Responsibility**
  - *Operational efficiency means streamlining processes and practices to ensure that resources are used in the most effective way possible.*
- **Standardized Assessment, Case Management, and Treatment**
  - *The Iowa DOC focuses on implementing consistent, evidence-based assessment tools to evaluate the needs, risks, and behaviors of all inmates.*
- **Seamless Transition from Prison through Reentry**
  - *The Iowa DOC strives to create a smooth and well-supported transition for inmates as they prepare to reintegrate into society. Reentry planning begins well before an inmate is released and involves providing support in areas such as housing, employment, education, and family reintegration.*
- **Continuous Quality Improvement for Key Evidence-based Practices**
  - *Continuous quality improvement (CQI) means that the Iowa DOC is committed to constantly assessing and improving the programs, practices, and services it offers.*
- **Data Driven Decision, Utilizing Dashboards, and Analytics**
  - *The Iowa DOC emphasizes the use of data to analyzing trends, outcomes, and performance metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and identify areas for improvement.*
- **Collaborative, Safe, and Inclusive Culture**
  - *A collaborative, safe, and inclusive culture within the Iowa DOC means creating an environment where all staff members, stakeholders, and inmates work together with mutual respect and a shared commitment to the Department's goals. This culture prioritizes the safety and well-being of staff and inmates alike, ensuring that security protocols are followed and that everyone feels valued.*

These concepts are all interlinked and help the Iowa DOC achieve its mission of promoting public safety while rehabilitating offenders, preparing them for successful reintegration into society.

THE FIVE STRATEGIC *Priorities*

These five Strategic Priorities serve as the foundation of the department, but without clear measurement, they risk being overlooked or stagnating. Each of these priorities is interconnected, with progress in one often driving improvements in the others. By identifying, setting goals, measuring progress, and fostering improvements in these five areas, we can successfully achieve the department's mission.

FIVE PRIORITIES

- **Security & Safety**
- **Reentry**
- **Treatment & Programing**
- **Culture**
- **Wellness**

GOVERNOR'S PRIORITIES

- **Security & Safety – Priority 1 (Rebuilding Our Communities)**
    - Key performance indicator identified as, "Overcapacity of prison population" to measure overall prison population
    - Key performance indicator identifies as, "Staff Vacancies" to measure staff numbers in Prison and Community Based Corrections
- **Reentry – Priority 1 (Rebuilding Our Communities) and Priority 5 (Saving Iowans Money)**
    - Key performance indicator identified as, "Department of Corrections requests to release review to Board of Parole" to measure Prison release to community supervision
- **Treatment & Programing – Priority 3 (Building a Strong, Competitive Iowa)**
- **Culture – Priority 1 (Rebuilding Our Communities)**
    - Staff surveys to assess morale, job satisfaction, and perceptions of organizational culture
- **Wellness – Priority 4 (Building a Strong, Competitive Iowa)**
    - Hold quarterly activities at each location in CBC's and Institutions

SECURITY & SAFETY

Defined

In the world of corrections, security and safety are more than just words—they are foundational principles that guide daily operations and long-term strategies.

Security in corrections refers to identifying and addressing dangers, threats, and vulnerabilities. This applies not only to staff but also to incarcerated individuals and community clients under supervision. A secure environment is essential for fostering the positive change we aim to instill in those within our care.

Safety, on the other hand, involves proactive planning and the implementation of measures to minimize risk. It ensures that both staff and individuals under correctional supervision are protected from potential harm or physical danger.

To effectively manage correctional institutions and community-based corrections, both security and safety must be thoroughly understood, consistently prioritized, and diligently monitored.

Goals

The goals in these two areas need to be measurable and achievable, with benchmarks along the way to work towards.

Security Goals

· Reduce assaults on Staff
· Reduce assaults on Inmates
· Reduce Contraband

Safety Goals

· Reduce workplace injuries
· Reduce OSHA citations

Increase and improve the accuracy in identifying and disrupting STG operations. Identification will be measured through CIRs and DRs. and STG operations.

Measures

Each of these goals is relatively easy to track. Once a baseline has been established, a quantified goal can be developed to be aimed for by each year for the next 5 years. This should include tracking for CBC and institutions.

THE FIVE STRATEGIC *Priorities*

SECURITY & SAFETY (CONT'D)

Data

Reduce Assaults on Staff: The number of staff assaults did increase in FY2021 compared to FY2020, however, the majority of this increase was attributable to staff assaults where no serious injury were sustained or throwing substances. In FY2021 Department made a variety of safety and security enhancements and FY22 and FY23 show staff assaults continuing to decrease. Those enhances include but are not limited to:

- The hiring of a Prison Safety and Security Director
- Hiring an external review team to thoroughly investigate and advise safety and security enhancements Department wide
- Implementation of a job assignment screening matrix

Assault Type	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Serious Injury	6	9	15	11	5	7
No Serious Injury	71	65	137	125	128	141
Throwing Substances	30	45	80	72	54	59
Total Number of Staff Assaulted	107	119	232	208	187	207

Reduce the Number of Inmate Assaults: Assaults are tracked through the DOC's Critical Incident Reports database. While the number of assaults involving inmates did increase in FY2021, it is important to note that this time period observed was during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic which was quite difficult for Corrections agencies who manage congregate populations. The DOC is committed to reviewing preexisting safety and security issues, and making improvements where appropriate.

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Inmate Incidents	19	12	18	14	9	12

Reduce Contraband: Data indicate the number of rule violations for serious contraband is at the lowest point observed within the last four fiscal years, however, is higher than in FY2017. Contraband can pose safety concerns for both inmates and staff and the DOC continues to work to develop new and innovative strategies to detect and remove contraband in prison facilities.In FY23 we did see this number decrease.

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Rules for Violated for Serious Contraband	3,298	3,079	3,349	3,875	2,991	3,413

SECURITY & SAFETY (CONT'D)

Reduce Workplace Injuries: In FY2022 the number of Life Safety Violations were at their lowest point observed in the last five fiscal years. The number of serious injuries, accidents, or offender deaths in FY2020 and FY2021 have remained stable however, were higher than historically.

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Number of Life Safety Violations	767	802	575	214	483	470
Number of Serious Injuries, Accidents, or Offender Deaths	270	307	309	362	276	356

Reduce OSHA Citations: Reducing the number of OSHA citations is most appropriately measured by examining the number of safety trainings completed for prison staff. In FY2020, the IDOC transitioned to Learning Management System Platforms (LMS). As a result of the change in the LMS, data reporting is limited to FY2021 figures. Many of the DOC's safety courses are taken once annually, annual reporting, as opposed to quarterly reporting are provided. The department will continue to track and monitor these outcomes over time to ensure progress towards safety course completions in order to reduce OSHA citations. In FY2021, IDOC staff in total, completed 5,388 unique safety courses. In FY22, that number increased to 7,646 and 7,576 in FY23.

	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Number of Personal Safety Training Sessions Completed	5,388	7,646	7,576	7,576

THE FIVE STRATEGIC *Priorities*

REENTRY

Defined

In corrections, "reentry" refers to the process of transitioning from incarceration back into the community, as well as moving from community supervision to successfully completing supervision requirements. Effectively preparing individuals under correctional supervision—including those in community-based corrections (CBC)—for successful reentry is essential for creating safer communities. Successful reentry not only reduces the overall prison population but also improves the staff-to-inmate ratio, enhancing both security and safety, while allowing for more focused resources on treatment and programming for each individual.

The majority of CBC clients are supervised on probation, with many achieving successful outcomes. If we consider probation supervision as a form of entry into the criminal justice system, then our reentry initiatives should encompass those on probation as well. To this end, the department should track outcomes for probation clients to effectively measure its reentry goals.

Goals

· Reduce the number of parolees revoked to prison for technical violations and new arrests
· Increase the percentage of inmates who secure employment within one month of release
· Enhance the success rate of clients completing probation supervision

Measures

Once baselines are established for each goal, benchmarks should be set on each of the reintegration goals. As with the other three core priorities, the Strategic Plan Scorecard should be updated monthly and progress shared to all staff across the department.

Data

To reduce the number of parolees revoked for technical violations and new arrests, the department reports a nearly 2.7% decrease in the overall recidivism rate in FY2023. Approximately 65.7% of individuals who successfully reentered the community after prison did not return within three years. Several initiatives contributing to this reduction include:

· Prioritizing institutional and community-based treatment for high-risk individuals
· Continuously utilizing program inventories to ensure evidence-based practices
· Aligning and improving reentry practices
· Increasing access to education and vocational opportunities
· Building capacity in apprenticeship programs
· Training staff in core correctional practices (CCP)
· Enhancing case management training

REENTRY (CONT'D)

The Department also reports that while the number of prison returns for new arrests has largely remained stable over the five-year period, the number of technical violations in FY2020 was the highest observed within the three-year period, however declined in FY2021. Findings in FY2020 however, may be related, in-part, to impacts of COVID-19. During the height of the pandemic, criminal court proceedings were paused for a short period creating a backlog of criminal court case reviews. In FY2021, these figures did however, decline, and individuals under community supervision were equally to be revoked to prison for a new arrest or technical violation.

There have been a series of implementation efforts developed to help reduce technical violations to prison. In FY2020, the Department implemented a practice of added review of revocations, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, to thoroughly screen those who needed to be revoked to prison versus those who could be managed in the community.

Additionally, the Department implemented a response matrix used to guide decision making when revocation decisions are considered, exploring whether options could be implored to safely manage an individual in the community.

Successful Integration Rate

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Overall Recidivism Rate	38.9%	40.6%	38.7%	37.0%	34.3%	35.8%
Successful Integration Rate	61.1%	59.4%	61.3%	63.0%	65.7%	64.2%

Increasing Employment Outcomes

In regard to increasing employment outcomes for those reentering the community, over the course of the last three-years, the Department has seen a steady employment rate for those employed after three-years of prison release from FY19 to FY23 ranging from a 30-32% employment percentage rate.

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Percentage of Population Employed	31.0%	31.6%	30.1%	31.8%	31.4%	30.3%

Increase the percentage of clients on probation supervision that successfully complete their supervision.

Measure: Count of community-based corrections successful and unsuccessful supervision completions.
Measure Results: Findings indicate that the number of successful community-based corrections has largely remained stable over the time-period observed, with successful completions comprising about 70% to 72% of all CBC supervision completions.

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Percentage of CBC Successful Supervision Completions	69.3%	71.8%	70.5%	69.8%	69.7%

THE FIVE STRATEGIC *Priorities*

TREATMENT & PROGRAMMING

With over 90% of individuals incarcerated eventually returning to their communities, the department has a responsibility to address the underlying issues that contributed to their criminal behavior. It is essential to work with each person in custody to treat these root causes and help reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Community-based supervision plays a critical role in addressing problematic behavior among higher-risk individuals through tailored treatment and intervention strategies, which increase the chances of successful reintegration into society.

Defined

Treatment involves identifying and addressing the behaviors that drive an individual's actions. This may include counseling, psychiatric support, or assistance from trained professionals to help inmates explore and overcome their challenges.

Programming focuses on providing evidence-based, high-quality interventions, classes, and programs designed to help inmates understand and improve their behavior. These programs aim to address personal deficits and equip individuals with the skills needed to become responsible, law-abiding citizens.

Measures

Increase the number of inmates receiving some form of behavioral intervention
Reduce the number of inmates leaving prison without having completed any programming
Reduce the percentage of clients under community supervision that have a need for treatment or programming and are not receiving the intervention or proper dosage

Each of these goals should be trackable with current data. The way the data is categorized may need refinement before it clearly captures the statistics that will allow everyone to see progress towards the goal. Once a baseline is established, benchmarks should be developed to focus the efforts of staff towards the goal.

Data

Increase the number of individuals incarcerated receiving some form of core programming: Examining data relating to prison closures, over the course of the last five-years, the proportion of prison closures who exit prison having received and completed core programming has increased by nearly 20%. Knowing that treatment helps to reduce recidivism indicates that the Department is moving in the right direction to prepare those leaving prison for community integration, and subsequently reducing the recidivism rate.

Safety Goals

· Minimize workplace injuries
· Lower OSHA citations

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Percentage of Prison Exits Completing Core Programming	50.3%	59.9%	66.2%	71.1%	75.2%	74.04%

Reduce the percentage of clients under community supervision that have a need for treatment or programming and are receiving the intervention or proper dosage.

CULTURE

Defined

In the world of corrections, culture is defined as beliefs, values, goals, and attitudes guiding our actions.

The goal is to facilitate achievement of DOC's culture goals, represented by five culture attributes of trust, courage, flexibility, innovation, and professional development. These attributes are proven to drive success and resilience in human services-focused organizations, including justice settings.

Cultivating a thriving culture within DOC requires understanding shared assumptions and behaviors, identifying culture priorities, integrating individual motivations and organizational priorities, and consistently assessing gaps between current assumptions and desired behaviors.

Goals

- Prioritize competencies and mindsets that support the ideal future state vision for institutions, districts and Central Office to operate as one team.
- Focus on ensuring all staff understand key functions of DOC and how to best work together to achieve DOC's mission.
- Establish robust infrastructure for providing proactive wraparound services (housing/placement, medical treatment, career development, etc.) to incarcerated individuals through effective communication and collaboration.

Measures

- Staff surveys to assess morale, job satisfaction, and perceptions of organizational culture
- Rotating On-Site Visits to build relationships and exchange feedback
- Live Streamed, Department wide Town Halls where leaders provide key updates to staff
- Joint Leadership Workgroup Meetings including Districts and Institutions

Data

Cultural enhancements include but are not limited to:

- Develop a recognition system within work units with immediate supervisors
- Increase front line staff engagement
- Revamp the performance evaluation process to a more encompassing, personal review of an employee's performance

THE FIVE STRATEGIC *Priorities*

WELLNESS

Defined

Employee well-being is an employee's overall mental, physical, emotional, social, and financial health.

The goal is to provide education, support, and resources to empower current and retired employees and their families to improve and maintain their overall health and well-being through healthy lifestyle choices and create a wellness culture throughout Iowa DOC.

The goal is to facilitate achievement of DOC's culture goals, represented by five culture attributes of trust, courage, flexibility, innovation, and professional development. These attributes are proven to drive success and resilience in human services-focused organizations, including justice settings.

Goals

· Create an environment where staff feel valued and supported
· Foster a culture of well-being among corrections staff by implementing work-life harmony initiatives, promoting open minded leadership with ONE shared philosophy
· Create a work space that prioritizes psychological and physical safety across all levels of employment

Measures

· Hold quarterly activities at each location in CBC's and Institutions
· Frequency and severity of workplace injuries, stress-related incidents, and burnout levels among correctional officers and staff
· Surveys or focus groups measuring satisfaction with wellness initiatives among both staff and inmates

Data

Wellness goal enhancements include but are not limited to:

· Prioritize professional development at all levels
· Increase front line staff engagement
· Front line supervision / leadership training

THE FOUR *Target Areas*

While taking specific steps to improve upon the five strategic priorities will be important, the department will also focus on four very specific target areas that will individually fuel improvements that will feed into the five strategic priorities. These target areas will be clear, actionable, achievable, and measurable.

FOUR AREAS

TRAIN & EMPOWER

REDUCE RISK & INCREASE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

REDUCE BARRIERS

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Further in the plan, definitions of the four target areas will be explored. Progress towards goals shall be tracked on a quarterly basis. Quarterly progress updates will be made available to the entire department.

TRAIN & EMPOWER

Defined

The strength of the Iowa Department of Corrections (IDOC) lies in its dedicated staff. To effectively achieve the department's strategic priorities, leadership must ensure that employees are well-trained, equipped, and empowered to carry out their responsibilities with confidence and competence.

Goals

The department is committed to fostering a workforce that is empowered, motivated, and well-trained to align with IDOC's policies and strategic objectives. Staff should:

- Have the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their duties effectively
- Feel supported and empowered in executing their responsibilities
- Be motivated to contribute meaningfully to IDOC's mission of safety, rehabilitation, and public service

Measures

- Empowerment Assessment: Annual employee surveys will measure staff perceptions of empowerment, engagement, and job satisfaction. Initial results will establish a baseline, with subsequent assessments tracking progress
- Training Quality and Effectiveness: Training hours will be monitored, with a focus on increasing development in priority areas
- Training Evaluation and Continuous Improvement:
  - Post-training surveys will be aggregated into quarterly reports to assess training effectiveness
  - Staff will complete a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) form to ensure training meets established standards, including instructor credentials and adherence to curriculum
  - Baseline proficiency levels in key skills and practices will be established and tracked over time to measure improvements

By prioritizing high-quality training and fostering an empowered workforce, IDOC will continue to build a strong, effective, and motivated team dedicated to its mission.

REDUCE RISK & INCREASE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

In corrections, risk refers to the likelihood that an individual will violate supervision terms or commit a new offense. Risk factors—such as criminal history, economic instability, and social influences—are characteristics that increase this likelihood.

Protective factors, on the other hand, reduce the impact of risk factors and contribute to positive outcomes. These include stable employment, education, positive peer relationships, and access to healthcare.

Goals

The department aims to reduce risk and strengthen protective factors by:

- Ensuring individuals are placed in appropriate treatment programs that address multiple risk factors
- Promoting employment, education, and skill-building to support long-term success
- Providing necessary medical and mental health treatment to improve well-being
- Identifying and reinforcing existing protective factors while reducing barriers to reentry

Measures

- Baseline Development: Establish initial data benchmarks for individuals needing treatment in both community supervision and prison settings
- Treatment Tracking: Monitor the percentage of individuals receiving necessary interventions and set goals for increasing access
- Risk & Protective Factor Trends: Aggregate and analyze risk scores across districts and institutions to track changes over time

Data

The Treatment and Programming section of this report tracks:

- The number of individuals under supervision who require treatment
- The percentage receiving interventions at the appropriate dosage.

For further insights, refer to the detailed data on treatment access and effectiveness within this report.

REDUCE BARRIERS

Defined

With over 90% of those incarcerated returning to the community, and with over 30,000 people at any time being on correctional supervision in the community, it is a priority for the department to identify, develop plans to address, and implement strategies to reduce the barriers that clients and/or inmates face that reduce the likelihood of successful rehabilitation or reintegration.

Goals

One of the largest barriers faced by reentering citizens is obtaining a state identification or driver's license. This major barrier, as it is foundational to so many other barriers, will be the sole focus in tracking the reduction of barriers. It shall be the goal that every individual leaving an institution, within 5 years, has either a state ID or DL before exiting.

Additionally, the state should set a goal of increasing the number of probation and parolees that attain employment in the community while on parole/probation supervision.

Measures

Incorporate a "Received State ID" and "Received State DL" checkbox into the ICON exit screen that will be checked or unchecked for each inmate leaving an institution. Work to increase this rate over time.

The DOC should also work with IWD and CBCs to develop a way to track employment outcomes (either for certain groups of clients, samples, or all clients). Increase this rate over time.

Data

The Reentry section of the strategic plan acknowledges the DOC's commitment to increasing the percentage of inmates employed in the community after prison release. The DOC is partnering with IWD to explore the extent to which individuals leaving prison are employed within three-years. The findings of those outcomes can be found within the Reentry section of this report.

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Defined

The department utilizes various programs and tools both in CBC and institutions. These programs and tools, while essential to our work, can only be as effective as the quality at which they are administered.

For example, if a DRAOR, a risk-calculation tool, is only administered at a 75% effectiveness, the scores that are calculated based on the assessment are only partially reliable. Over time, this can have compounding impacts on the system as these tools are what help identify placements, supervision levels, and treatments. Similarly, if a treatment program is only being administered with 75% fidelity, the program cannot be expected to result in the desired outcomes of the treatment over time.

Thus, the department will be making continuous quality improvement a target area. This means focusing on assessing the quality of the tools and programs we are using and providing, and taking efforts to improve this quality over time.

Goals

The goal is simple but essential: Assess current quality of tools and programs, and develop benchmarks for improvement.

Measures

· Assess CQI tools and Department readiness
· Provide guidance to Learning Center on Department needs

IN *Conclusion*

The Department of Corrections is committed to fostering a rehabilitative environment that prioritizes reentry, treatment, security, culture, and wellness. By implementing this strategic plan, we aim to reduce recidivism, enhance the safety of our facilities, and support both our staff and those we serve in leading productive, healthy lives.

FY21-26 STRATEGIC PLAN

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