



COLORADO

Department of Local Affairs



DOLA 2024 – 2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Efficiency, Effectiveness,
Transparency, Impact & Leadership

Strategies That Advance Priorities, Strengthen
Sustainability & Consistently Drive Action



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Executive Summary

To focus the resources and efforts of the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) and provide a framework for daily action to advance the Department's goals, the Executive Director (E.D.) established a set of priorities to guide the approach to the Department's work. In partnership with DOLA leaders, the E.D. has identified a set of key strategic levers that will advance those priorities and actionable steps that can be taken within each of those areas.

This strategic plan is informed by hundreds of points of input from DOLA Division leaders, program and office managers and staff across DOLA. Nothing in this plan is intended to replace Department goals or the mission of DOLA. In fact, these strategies have been carefully developed to strengthen the overall work of the Department, to provide a roadmap for daily actions in pursuit of those goals and to strengthen the sustainability of progress toward mission by consistently driving efficient and effective actions across all of DOLA's programs.

Based on the priorities set by the Executive Director and the collaboration among DOLA leaders to identify key needs and opportunities, discussions were held to solicit the input of hundreds of staff members across DOLA. Conversations explored how best to operationalize the priorities, what key strategies would have maximum impact, the implications for program staff, opportunities to leverage existing resources and where new or different skills, resources and approaches would be needed.

Ideas generated by staff to advance priorities were cross-walked with each of the priorities to begin building a framework for action. DOLA leaders discussed the ideas generated during their initial discussions and the input of their teams to further shape that framework. Informed by the totality of these conversations, the following strategic levers were identified as being high impact strategies:

- ◆ Human Capital: Maximizing staff talent;
- ◆ Alignment & Awareness: Smart use of time, people and information;
- ◆ Programs & Processes: Intentional design and staff engagement;
- ◆ Communications: Strategic communications internally and externally; and
- ◆ Data & I.T.: Short and long-term needs-based technology strategies.

Guided by this streamlined set of strategic levers, DOLA leaders discussed the approach necessary and specifically, actionable steps within each strategic lever that would have a high likelihood of advancing the Department's priorities, making progress toward WIGs and provide an easy to follow, easy to update and easy to tailor to each Division roadmap. Actions and operational tactics were identified for the overall Department's work in advancing the priorities as a whole and even more specific tactics to advance each individual priority.



As is noted in the final pages of this plan, the 2024-2026 DOLA Strategic Plan should be viewed as a roadmap and set of guiding principles that must be regularly assessed and adjusted to respond to changing facts in the State while maintaining its overall focus areas. Each strategy and tactic discussed must also be tailored to the context and conditions of each Division, office and program.

Background

In early 2024, DOLA Executive Director Maria De Cambra drafted a set of four priorities for the Department to advance the mission of the Department, her vision for its work, its most recent set of Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) and the goals of Governor Polis. Executive Director (E.D.) De Cambra had been appointed to lead DOLA after the Department had experienced substantial growth in staff size, programs managed and funds overseen and distributed.

As one of the executive agencies responsible for distributing hundreds of millions in federal relief funds during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to supporting local governments in their response and recovery, DOLA's staff size and workload had expanded significantly in a short period.

In addition to the critical work distributing and supporting the use of both federal and state funds, the broad work of DOLA was taking on even greater importance for managing Colorado's economic growth and recovery. The pandemic had exacerbated the challenges in housing which stretched across the state and included affordable housing needs, workforce housing and an overall housing shortage at a time of growing home prices statewide. The state's complicated fiscal policy system had contributed to increasing property taxes. These factors all led to even greater demand for and attention on the work of DOLA's Division of Housing, Division of Local Government, Division of Property Tax and the entire Department.

With federal relief funds coming to an end, demand for support continuing and the state budget limited, E.D. DeCambra set a bold vision for the Department to become even more efficient in its operations, focus on transparency and impact, elevate the awareness of DOLA's work and become a proactive leader, thought partner, and innovative driver of action in housing solutions.

Those priorities, identified by E.D. De Cambra, and refined in partnership with her leadership team and the Governor’s Office, served as the foundation to guide the Department’s three year strategic planning process. The priorities did not set new goals or performance indicators but instead laid out a clear set of strategic levers, each with their own set of tactics or actions to operationalize them that would collectively drive toward the Department’s WIGs, the Governor’s agenda and priorities, and the needs of the people and local governments across Colorado.

The plan on the following pages builds on E.D. De Cambra’s vision to operationalize it with a clear roadmap to inform actions that will be tailored to the unique contexts of each Division, Office and program. The plan is a result of a collaborative process with DOLA’s Division leaders, robust engagement with office and program managers, direct input from staff and the support of expert consultants who have guided strategic planning for dozens of state governments, state agencies, local governments, non-profits and private businesses across the country.



Elements That Drive & Inform Action

In reading and implementing this strategic plan, it is critical to be clear on each component of the plan and DOLA's overall approach to realizing its mission and meeting its goals. It is particularly important to define and differentiate the role and interplay between DOLA's mission, Wildly Important Goals (WIGs), priorities, strategies, and tactics.

Mission

- ◆ Establishes the purpose of the work (The "Why")
- ◆ Bold, Aspirational, Results Focused Description
- ◆ Department Level North Star

WIGS

- ◆ Establish Bold, Critical Goals Of Progress and Success
- ◆ Measurable Assessment of Outcomes
- ◆ Department Level Goals With Division Responsibilities

Strategies

- ◆ Guide Approach to Work and Inform Tactics
- ◆ Prioritized and Focused Levers of Action
- ◆ DOLA Wide Approach, Contextualized By Divisions

Priorities

- ◆ Define What Will Be Focused On To Achieve Success
- ◆ Informed By Goals and Areas for Change or Emphasis
- ◆ Department Wide

Tactics & Actions

- ◆ Implement and Operationalize Strategies
- ◆ Daily Actions
- ◆ Division and Program Specific

Priorities

Efficiency in Operations

DOLA will make significant improvements to internal operations that lead to measurable improvements in the efficiency of our systems, processes and operations while maintaining the quality and accuracy of our work.

Transparency & Impact Focus

DOLA will have a department-wide norm and expectation of continuously monitoring impact of programs and resource allocation. Using transparency as a tool and the foundation of DOLA's Efficiency in Operations priority, DOLA will ensure efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and ease of access are fundamental elements of each program, division and office.

Educate & Elevate

DOLA will develop and execute a strategic communications plan to educate local government officials, developers, professional and business associations, other local partners and members of the public about the broad work of DOLA and how to interface with DOLA's programs.

Proactive Leader on Housing

DOLA will become a driving force in the housing space. DOLA will foster a department-wide culture & commitment to being a pro-active partner to local government on housing issues. DOLA will bring the latest thinking and innovative solutions to address local housing challenges. This will include leaning in, being an expert partner and bringing new ideas as a forward thinking leader helping to drive action in addition to being a partner ready to react to local needs or requests.

Strategies: Prioritized Levers of Action

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES

Human Capital: Prioritizing our people.

Among DOLA's greatest assets are its people. By fostering a culture that encourages excellence, growth, retention, and efficiency at all levels, DOLA will leverage our people to make progress on each DOLA Priority.

Alignment & Awareness: Smart use of time, people, and information.

DOLA will drive even greater efficiency and outcomes by leveraging internal resources, data, and expertise, ensuring alignment of staff time with DOLA or Division goals, and expanding awareness within the Department of programs, processes, stakeholder needs and internal resources.

Programs & Processes: Intentional design and staff engagement.

Achieve greater program impact and internal efficiencies through multiple strategies. Among the lowest cost, easier to implement with both short and long-term effects are intentional, proactive fiscal management, the improvement of program design processes and the early, strategic involvement of staff in the design or redesign process.



Communications: Strategic communications internally and externally.

A robust strategic communications plan is critical to elevate the work of DOLA, improve transparency, better position the Department as a proactive leader on housing, and improve the understanding and impact of all DOLA programs. Internal communications are critical to meeting department goals and for department-wide coordination. The plan must also address communications within the executive and legislative branches of government, with partners and stakeholders in the field, and with the media.

Data & I.T.: Short and long-term needs-based technology strategies.

Significant progress can be made on all four DOLA priorities, and with them DOLA's WIGs, through improved data use and the overall data and I.T. strategy of the Department. In addition to the direct contribution toward the efficiency and transparency of DOLA's work, indirect benefits will include freeing up time for staff to spend on other tasks critical to the priorities and easier, more robust access to data to tell the story of DOLA's work and to support partners in the field. Data and I.T. strategies are inherently complex and some are limited by statewide efforts or protocols but there is ample room for action within DOLA.

DETAIL ON THE STRATEGIES

Human Capital: Prioritizing our people.

The work and opportunity

Among DOLA's greatest assets are its people. By fostering a culture that encourages excellence, growth, retention, and efficiency at all levels, DOLA will leverage our people to make progress on each DOLA Priority.

Among the key tactics and actions that are part of this strategic lever are:

- ◆ Intentional, strategic management of offices, programs and individual staff members;
- ◆ Regular reviews of staff resiliency, including back-up plans and succession planning;
- ◆ Targeted communications to employees to promote goal alignment, information sharing, and culture formation;
- ◆ Calendar and task audits to improve efficiency and time on priority tasks;
- ◆ Setting and monitoring progress on hiring goals and time to fill vacancies;
- ◆ Personalized, forward looking, division and department-relevant professional development;
- ◆ Leadership support of innovation, growth and measured risk-taking;
- ◆ Intentional time among leaders to proactively manage staff toward personal and division goals with clearly defined metrics of success;
- ◆ Monitoring staffing levels and needs, adjusting where needed and identifying opportunities for continuous improvement in all aspects; and
- ◆ Prioritizing time for individual growth, time in field, collaboration and ideation.

3 Year North Star / Picture of Success



A DOLA team that is resilient, responsive, and effective, as demonstrated by high levels of employee satisfaction, continuous learning, and low vacancy rates.

1 Year Milestones

- ◆ All new employees have both general department orientation and job-specific training/orientation within one week of hire by June 30, 2025;
- ◆ Implementation of DOLA mentorship program for new and rising employees by June 30, 2025;
- ◆ Succession planning template developed and shared with employees who are planning to retire or leave the department by June 30, 2025; and
- ◆ Identify a dedicated training and development budget that is accessible to all employees by June 30, 2025.

Alignment & Awareness:

Smart use of time, people and information.

The work and opportunity

DOLA will drive even greater efficiency and outcomes by leveraging internal resources, data, and expertise, while also ensuring alignment of staff time with DOLA or Division goals, and expanding awareness within the Department of programs, processes, stakeholder needs and internal resources.

Among the key tactics and actions that are part of this strategic lever are:

- ◆ Greater utilization of expertise of the Division of Property Tax and the State Demographer's Office;
- ◆ Expanded collection of how stakeholders, particularly local governments and agencies, use data or expertise from DOLA, including outcomes, to elevate exemplars;
- ◆ Assessment of program sustainability with attention to smaller programs where institutional knowledge could be lost during staff changes;
- ◆ Fostering a culture that encourages cross-division collaboration and inquiries;
- ◆ Conduct program reviews to determine alignment of programs with strategic plan priorities where possible; and
- ◆ Strategically-designed information sharing workshops internally and externally.

3 Year North Star / Picture of Success



DOLA is looked to as a leader for driving improved outcomes for Coloradans in housing and community development, using data to drive, inform, and improve its programs and the efforts of partner organizations.

1 Year Milestones

- ◆ Become a leader in distributing valuable data for the customers we serve by identifying, publishing and/or amplifying at least 3 datasets by June 30, 2025;
- ◆ Develop one-pagers of key offices and programs within DOLA that can be shared both internally and externally by June 30, 2025.

Programs & Processes:

Intentional design and staff engagement.

The work and opportunity

Greater program impact and internal efficiencies can be achieved through multiple strategies. Among the lowest cost, easier to implement with both short and long-term effects is the improvement of program design processes and the early, strategic involvement of staff in the design or redesign process. Another key lever is improvements to back-end processes that impact the implementation of all Department programs.

Among the key tactics and actions that are part of this strategic lever are:

- ◆ DOLA led efforts to identify, design and promote programs aligned with priorities and WIGs;
- ◆ Prioritized engagement of program staff in legislation contemplating new programs, in order to inform theory of action, envisioned outcomes, underlying data needs, and measures of success;
- ◆ Department-wide collaborative review and redesign of contracting processes;
- ◆ Proactive and intentional fiscal management, including communications with budget teams and development of fiscal management strategies;
- ◆ Active, strategic promotion of existing programs, division goals, and expertise across executive and legislative branches to position staff to drive and inform programs and foster collaboration; and
- ◆ Dedicated program evaluation staff or allocated time and appropriate professional development for existing staff to conduct program evaluations.

3 Year North Star / Picture of Success



DOLA staff are implementing programs using industry best practices and/or innovative techniques to improve customer experience and outcomes. Meanwhile, DOLA staff are supported with effective, efficient back-end management of key processes such as budget and contracting.



1 Year Milestones

- ◆ Create a process to track draft legislation and fiscal notes that will prioritize bills for agency engagement, and identify a point of contact for SME review to provide insight on the theory of action, measures of success and program outcomes in the 2025 legislative session. Staff will provide feedback on the new tracking system at the end of the 2025 legislative session in order to make improvements prior to 2026;
- ◆ Develop a roadmap for a Department-wide strategy to refine contracting processes by June 30, 2025; and
- ◆ All divisions will participate in monthly meetings to review fiscal management (including spending and revenue updates). There are clear expectations for roles and responsibilities. The monthly meetings will inform what information will be presented in the Quarterly Budget Updates by June 30, 2025.

Communications:

Strategic communications internally and externally.

The work and opportunity

To elevate the work of DOLA, improve transparency, better position the Department as a proactive leader on housing and improve the understanding and impact of all DOLA programs, a robust strategic communications plan is critical. The plan must address communications within DOLA, within the executive and legislative branches of government, with partners and stakeholders in the field and with the media.

Among the key tactics and actions that are part of this strategic lever are:

- ◆ Regular, intentional participation of communications staff, Division leaders and program managers in communications meetings, using communications documents (e.g. speaking engagement tracker) to ensure continuous awareness of what DOLA is doing out in the field, the human element of our projects and showing DOLA is getting things done;
- ◆ Contribute to a comprehensive strategic communications plan that is tightly aligned on messaging with the Executive Director's vision, WIGs and strategic priorities with measurable objectives and operational tactics;
- ◆ Identify subject matter experts in each Division to work directly with the Communications Team to ensure that each Division is well represented in DOLA's external messaging and ensure accurate branded content, specifically supporting social media;



- ◆ Contribute to monthly leadership meetings across the state to make sure historical DOLA projects are highlighted, leadership is well prepared with demographic data to inform talking points ahead of meetings with commissioners, legislators, and other local electeds; and
- ◆ On a rotating basis, Divisions coordinate with the Communications Director on a Division Deep Dive in the bimonthly internal all-staff meetings.

3 Year North Star / Picture of Success



Key leaders, stakeholders, and members of the communities DOLA serves are familiar with the Department and its key programs, and the Department is effectively communicating its successes and the impact of its work.

1 Year Milestones

- ◆ Have DOLA leadership buy-in on the external communications goals and objectives from the strategic plan by June 30, 2025;
- ◆ Implement the top 3 internal communications strategies and measure effectiveness by June 30, 2025; and
- ◆ 4 Leadership Visits to key areas of the state ahead of the 2025 SMART Act Hearing.

Data & I.T.:

Short and long-term needs-based technology strategies.

The work and opportunity

Significant progress can be made on all four DOLA priorities and DOLA's WIGs through improved data use and the overall data and I.T. strategy of the Department. In addition to the direct contribution toward the efficiency and transparency of DOLA's work, indirect benefits will include freeing up time for staff to spend on other tasks and easier, more robust access to data to tell the story of DOLA's work and to support partners in the field. Data and I.T. strategies are inherently complex and some are limited by statewide efforts or protocols but there is ample room for action within DOLA.

Among the key tactics and actions that are part of this strategic lever are:

- ◆ Convening of a department-wide working group on data and I.T. strategy;
- ◆ Creation of a three year data and I.T. vision and strategy including elements that require OIT support or collaboration and elements that can be adopted within DOLA; and
- ◆ Establishing one-year data priorities that directly align with priorities and can be implemented at minimal cost.

3 Year North Star / Picture of Success



DOLA has technology systems for key back-end processes, including contracting, HR management, and budget delivery, and plans to address key IT gaps among programs.

1 Year Milestones

- ◆ A Business Product Manager will be hired to serve as lead for I.T. implementation by June 30, 2025;
- ◆ Department staff will consult IT product leads as well as OIT for all relevant legislation to ensure the fiscal note reflects true IT costs and is aligned with the department I.T. strategy during the 2025 legislative session; and
- ◆ Deploy OIT project tracking dashboard by June 30, 2025.

Strategies Advancing Priorities

Each strategic lever of change plays an important role in driving change and informing actions that support DOLA's four key priorities. While some of these strategies have a role in all four priorities and others have a primary role only in a subset of priorities, it is critical to view them as equally important levers whose power is in their combined effect and outcomes.

Efficiency in Operations

- ◆ Human Capital
- ◆ Alignment & Awareness
- ◆ Programs & Processes
- ◆ Data & I.T.

Transparency & Impact

- ◆ Human Capital
- ◆ Alignment & Awareness
- ◆ Programs & Processes
- ◆ Data & I.T.

Educate & Elevate DOLA

- ◆ Human Capital
- ◆ Alignment & Awareness
- ◆ Communications

Proactive Leader on Housing

- ◆ Human Capital
- ◆ Alignment & Awareness
- ◆ Programs & Processes
- ◆ Communications

The theory of action for the role of each strategic lever in the four priorities will have some commonalities but the role it plays will be unique for each. Similarly, the strategic levers will have some tactics or actions to implement and support that carry across all priorities but will have significantly more that are defined by the intended outcome of each priority. As is discussed in the "Tailoring to Context" section, the tactics should also be tailored, expanded or otherwise revised to meet the specific needs and factors of each Division, Office and Program.

Tactics to Operationalize

Universal, Multi-Division or Department-Wide

Strategic Lever	Tactics & Actions
Human Capital	◆ Regular reviews of staff resiliency, including back-up plans and succession planning; ◆ Targeted communications to employees to promote goal alignment, information sharing, and culture formation; ◆ Setting and monitoring progress on hiring goals and time to fill vacancies; ◆ Personalized, forward looking, division and department-relevant professional development.
Alignment & Awareness	◆ Expanded collection of how stakeholders, particularly local governments and agencies, use data or expertise from DOLA, including outcomes, to elevate exemplars; ◆ Assessment of program sustainability with attention to smaller programs where institutional knowledge could be lost during staff changes; ◆ Strategically-designed information sharing workshops internally and externally.



Strategic Lever	Tactics & Actions
Programs & Processes	◆ Prioritized engagement of program staff in legislation contemplating new programs, in order to inform theory of action, envisioned outcomes, underlying data needs, and measures of success; ◆ Department-wide collaborative review and redesign of contracting processes; ◆ Proactive and intentional fiscal management, including communications with budget teams and development of fiscal management strategies.
Communications	◆ Contribute to a comprehensive strategic communications plan that is tightly aligned on messaging with the Executive Director's vision, WIGs and strategic priorities with measurable objectives and operational tactics; ◆ Contribute to monthly leadership meetings across the state to make sure historical DOLA projects are highlighted, leadership is well prepared with demographic data to inform talking points ahead of meetings with commissioners, legislators, and other local electeds.
Data & I.T.	◆ Convening of a department-wide working group on data and I.T. strategy; ◆ Creation of a three year data and I.T. vision and strategy including elements that require OIT support or collaboration and elements that can be adopted within DOLA; ◆ Establishing one-year data priorities that directly align with priorities and can be implemented at minimal cost.

Tailoring to Context: Division & Program Factors & Roles

DOLA is home to eight divisions, offices and boards that all contribute to the Department's ability to consistently take action in service of DOLA's mission. Each of these eight and the dozens of offices and programs within them are as critical to DOLA's success as they are unique in the role they play. For these reasons, and in service of the "One DOLA" commitment, each division, office and board will share in the use of the tactics or actions identified as department-wide tactics for operationalizing DOLA's strategic plan.

Recognizing the unique services, structure and dynamics of each division, each leader is encouraged to tailor their strategy map to their context. Division, office and board leaders should use the template strategy map at the end of this document as a guide for developing their strategy map through a process that includes:

1. Incorporation of the DOLA-wide tactics from the Tactics to Operationalize table;
2. Development, in partnership with the EDO and Chief Strategy Officer, of the Intended Outcome for each Strategic Lever that reflects their teams' work and context;
3. Review and consideration of the longer list of tactics and actions contained in the Strategic Levers in this plan or others identified by their leadership team for inclusion in any one or more of the strategic levers in their division's strategy map;
4. Development of a three-year definition of success and one or more one-year milestones to assess progress and effectiveness of approach; and
5. Cross-walking of existing programs or initiatives to identify where existing efforts align with the strategic levers and should be included in the tactics and actions.

Strengthening Sustainability: Continuous Monitoring & Assessment

Every strategic plan should be viewed and treated as a living document that remains steady in its underlying principles, priorities and strategic levers while being fluid and flexible enough in its tactics to be responsive to both its effectiveness and to facts on the ground. This is particularly true for a plan guiding the work done by DOLA where programs can be affected by factors outside the Department's control ranging from economic shifts and natural disasters to state or federal politics, regulations or funding streams.

At the Department level, leaders should conduct annual assessments of progress toward milestones and effectiveness of tactics or actions. Division, office and board leaders should conduct a similar annual assessment and informal quarterly check-ins with their teams and the Department's Chief Strategy Officer. Annual and quarterly assessments should consider:

1. Milestone Assessment

- a. Are we on track to meet each of our one-year milestones?
- b. Do those milestones and the progress toward them still align with the three-year picture of success?
- c. If behind on one or more, is that expected because of the time for actions being used to achieve progress or do we need to adjust course?
- d. If on-track or ahead of pace, should the milestone be made more ambitious?

2. Tactics and Actions Assessment

- a. Is each being considered or utilized by most or all staff in their work?
- b. Do staff understand and have the capacity or resources to utilize those that are most applicable to their work?
- c. How effectively are the tactics or actions advancing the work and progress to both the one-year milestone and the three-year picture of success?
- d. For any tactics or actions not being utilized or not having the intended effect, do the tactics need to be reconsidered or does how they are utilized?

While staff are encouraged to set personal performance goals in alignment with the priorities, strategies, and/or tactics identified in this strategic plan, review of progress against the plan is not intended to be punitive or discourage frank discourse about opportunities and challenges.





Department & Division Strategic Maps

These maps should be completed by the E.D. for the Department and by each Division/Unit leader. Strategic Maps serve as both the guide and accountability system. These maps should be fully updated annually and incorporated into quarterly check-ins with managers.

Strategic Lever	Intended Outcome	Tactics & Aligned Programs or Initiatives
Human Capital		
Alignment & Awareness		
Programs & Processes		
Communications		
Data & I.T.		



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