

100% LOVE

Culture Guide



Welcome to 100% LOVE

(Living Our Values Everyday)

Welcome to Wasco County and our culture guide. We recognize that each person on the county team has unique skills to contribute to the success of our efforts. You are part of a team that is creating excitement for building a culture where employees, vendors and constituents become partners in building a prosperous Wasco County by living our values everyday (LOVE).

This document is an acknowledgement of the positive efforts already happening, as well as a challenge to build culture mindfully. One that we believe will retain and attract the best and brightest talent from the county and beyond, energized by what's possible in serving the citizens today; a culture that will leave the legacy of a prosperous Wasco County tomorrow.

What's the story behind 100% LOVE?

Following a particularly negative interaction with another entity on a project, the County Clerk and the County Administrator were reviewing the meeting and how difficult it had been. For the Clerk, new to the public sector, it was the first project where it became apparent that some citizens don't like county government, no matter how hard we try to help. The Administrator jokingly said, "Welcome to county government. 50% of the people love you, and 50% of the people love to hate you." To which the Clerk replied "Yes, but that's still 100% LOVE!"

That tongue-in-cheek remark, upon further reflection, began to emerge as a concept with much deeper meaning; a way of thinking about all aspects of what we do. We looked for examples of 100% LOVE on which we could build and grow the culture which now permeates our organization and is reflected in our actions, our approach to doing business and our overall being . . . it is the guiding principle for everything at Wasco County.

As individuals we provide the extra effort to make sure those who we are dealing with walk away from the interaction feeling good about the service they have received; we recognize the efforts of others and share examples of 100% LOVE—we tell the story! As a team we make sure our teammates are successful; we pitch in to help; we hire for culture and welcome new employees to that culture. We identify, share and celebrate examples of 100% LOVE—we tell the story! As an organization, we ensure that our system and processes support the culture; we work to cross-train, we support organizational initiatives; we celebrate our successes and unflinchingly examine our failures; we seek out partnerships in the community and promote the County whenever possible. We identify and share examples of 100% LOVE—we tell the story!

Now it's your turn

Storytelling is the social and cultural activity of sharing stories. Stories are shared as a means of education, entertainment and cultural preservation. It is a way of sharing values, mission and vision.

As a member of the Wasco County team, we encourage you to look for – and tell – the 100% LOVE stories you see each day. Maybe it's a great exchange with a citizen at the service counter. Maybe it's a co-worker going the extra mile on a project. Maybe it's a department celebrating a milestone, or getting to know another department better. Whatever stories you see happening at the County that represent the 100% LOVE culture, spread the word; storytelling is how we build and preserve our culture.

Start with Why

In 2016, Wasco County developed a new Vision, Mission and Core Values that guide how we serve the citizens of our county and the members of our team. The Core Values are at the heart of our culture.

Wasco County's Core Values

An organization's culture is only as strong as the people who bring it to life. Having the right people, who believe in and live out the core values of the organization (shown below), is the first and most critical step.

Embody the 100% LOVE culture

- Equity and fairness in all things
- Keep an open mind and be open to change
- Kindness and compassion for people who live in our community
- Love what you do and have fun doing it
- Build a strong team
- Excellence in service
- Recognize and appreciate unique perspectives

Relationships are primary

- Relationships come first, whether individuals or organizations
- Be a good neighbor
- Use honest and active communication
- Say what you mean, with 100% LOVE

Do the right thing, even when no one is watching

- Provide open access and transparency
- Accountable for actions and decisions
- Be impeccable stewards of our resources
- Strive to be the best performing rural county government

Why does culture matter at Wasco County?

As a government agency, we are tasked with upholding the Constitution of the United States and the State of Oregon. But more importantly, we are here to serve the citizens of Wasco County! Our team provides services ranging from public safety, to elections, to maintaining roads and managing tax dollars responsibly. It is Wasco County's goal to truly serve citizens with fair and honest communication, transparency in how we conduct business, and providing the best possible service whether citizens love us or love to hate us.

These are noble goals, but to achieve this means getting everyone “on the bus.” With more than 15 different departments in our organization, it’s easy to become insulated and have each department act on its own. Wasco County’s intent is to act as a single, cohesive entity where citizens get the same level of great service no matter which department they visit.

What are the characteristics of the 100% LOVE culture?

- Healthy
- Open
- Progressive vision – far thinking and ready to dream big
- Value diverse opinions
- Tremendous strengths
- Special
- Empowering
- Great team – best ever
- Open to risk
- Shared values
- Everyone has a voice and is respected
- Always growing – open to new ideas
- Excited – element of magic
- Enjoy and have fun
- Be supportive of other’s efforts

What additional characteristics do you believe our culture should embrace? This will be an ongoing conversation in our organization as we move forward on this journey.

How we build culture

Making it intentional at each level of the organization

Building a culture requires a commitment from each person, each team, and the County as a whole to embody the values discussed in this document. It means bringing the words on paper to life in a visible and tangible way. An organization can have a good culture without a lot of effort, but a GREAT culture comes from daily, intentional effort.

Having the “right people on the bus”

In Jim Collins’ book, Good to Great, he states:

“The executives who ignited the transformations from good to great did not first figure out where to drive the bus and then get people to take it there. No they first got the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then figured out where to drive it. They said, in essence, “Look, I don’t really know where we should take this bus. But I know this much: If we get the right people on the bus, the right people in the right seats, and the wrong people off the bus, then we’ll figure out how to take it someplace great.”

The County consistently seeks to employ and retain people who want to “be on the bus” and in the right seat. During the hiring process and performance reviews, discussions about the qualities of someone we believe will embody our 100% LOVE culture are at the forefront. Some of those qualities include:

- Positive
- Passionate
- Supportive
- Empathetic
- Truly listen and hear
- Understand
- Technical excellence
- Top of game
- Willing to do what is needed
- Stimulating
- Offer a different perspective
- Solution oriented
- Open minded
- Confidential
- Hard working
- Common sense, realistic
- Creative
- Trustworthy

- Loyal
- Honest
- Agile
- Fun

With all people we employ, we will “open the door” to the new culture and support them to walk through it. This means making an investment to support employees through additional tools/skills, coaching, accountability, honest and kind communication, performance reviews, follow-through, and building trust. For employees who decide our culture is not right for them, we will help them transition to another organization that is a better fit for them.

Have the “right people in the right seats”

A second key step of building culture is to make sure people are in the right seats on the bus – that they are a good fit with what is required and can excel at their job. It’s expected that our management team will:

- Know how many seats we have
- Know what the roles and responsibilities are for each seat (the function)
- Know what is required for performance
- Determine if each person in a particular role:
 - Understands their role
 - Wants to be in that role
 - Has the capacity to fulfill the role
 - Is willing to be accountable for the role

Expectations at the Individual Level

100% LOVE at the individual level defines our actions. It asks us to provide that extra effort to make sure those who we are dealing with walk away from the interaction feeling a little bit better or a bit more satisfied with the service they received. It means taking the extra step you wouldn’t normally do to ensure a positive reaction. It is in alignment with our value of doing the right thing even when nobody is watching. We recognize the efforts of our co-workers and we tell their stories.

Here are specific examples of active engagement of the culture:

- Employees can state the core values from memory
- Employees have been trained on Emotional Literacy to guide interpersonal interactions
- Communication flows in both directions - information and questions are flowing from employees up to team and organizational levels and vice versa
- New employees are introduced to the culture during recruitment and orientation
- Reviews incorporate alignment with core values
- Option to participate in the Mentor Program

- Employees make an effort to build one-on-one relationships
- Model the core values
- Employees are ambassadors for the culture

100% LOVE in Action: The Deputy and the Mailbox

A deputy from the Sheriff's office was called out to a citizen's house where the woman's mailbox had been destroyed. The woman was quite distraught – her husband had died one month prior and she was experiencing emotional trauma. After calling in the right resources to help the woman, the deputy decided the next day to go check on her and see how she was doing. On his way out to visit, he stopped by the hardware store and bought supplies (with his own money) to replace her mailbox and took care of it when he got there!

Expectations at the Team/Department Level

100% LOVE means making sure that our teammates are successful. When they are struggling or overloaded we pitch in to help. When they don't understand, we are there to explain. If we are to be successful as an organization and as a team, then we must support each team's success through our own actions. We hire the right people, with the right traits and the right attitude to fit into this culture. We teach our culture as part of the welcoming/onboarding process when they start. We identify, share and celebrate examples.

Here are specific examples of active engagement of the culture:

- Hiring/separation of employees based on core values
- Training on the use of Emotional Literacy for staff meetings
- Recognizing that we conduct County business from different locations, be purposeful about scheduling meetings and events at locations other than your own.
- Values and culture are incorporated in regular staff meetings
- Model the core values
- Communication Flow - ensure information is flowing to the teams. News - good or bad - is delivered directly to employees
- Opportunities are provided to engage with the culture
- Reviews incorporate alignment with core values
- There is ongoing communication with each employee that incorporates asking how things are going
- Embrace mistakes as opportunities to improve. No shame, no blame.
- Eliminate unnecessary restrictions, eliminate the handoffs. Be consistent.
- We encourage happiness in the work place - small fun things, music, small celebrations, etc.
- Capacity and work-life balance issues are addressed
- Play and exercise/wellness are encouraged

100% LOVE in Action: The Christmas Door

During Christmas of 2015, the Administrative team was too swamped to decorate their door (despite it being a favorite activity). When the Assessor's office heard that they weren't going to be able to decorate, they created a design and decorated the door like a giant penguin. The Administrative team was able to enjoy the love throughout the holiday season due to the thoughtfulness of the Assessor's team!

100% LOVE in Action: Trading Spaces

In January of 2016, the Clerk's office and Assessor's office traded spaces in the courthouse so that the 14-person Assessor's team could have more room. This effort involved multiple people – Facilities, IT, help from youth offenders doing community service, the Commissioners and other managers. Spaces were painted, furniture was moved – an entire crew worked over the weekend to get the offices moved and set up again on Monday so citizens could be served. On Monday morning, a “key exchange” ceremony was held to recognize the efforts of all involved and acknowledge the willingness of employees to embrace change.

Expectations at the Organizational Level

100% LOVE as an organization ensures that we support the success of every other department. If someone is shorthanded we make time to help out. We work to cross-train through participation in cross-functional teams. We work to ensure the success of organizational initiatives, we celebrate our successes and we unflinchingly examine areas for improvement. We seek out partnerships in the community and we promote the County (both entity and geographic area) whenever possible. We identify and share examples of 100% LOVE and we tell the Story.

Here are specific examples of active engagement of the culture:

- Decision-making is in alignment with our Core Values, Vision and Mission.
- Eliminate unnecessary restrictions, eliminate the handoffs. Be consistent.
- Emotional Literacy is embraced as a mechanism for healthy communication
- A key component of hiring managers is their ability to build and maintain good relationships
- Budgeting is in alignment with core values
- Hiring/separation of employees is conducted in alignment with core values
- Education on hiring for “A Players” is provided (what is it, how to recognize one)
- We create Succession plans in alignment with culture
- We encourage continuous growth and learning for employees
- Recognizing that we conduct County business from different locations, be purposeful about scheduling meetings and events at locations other than your own.
- Recognition/awards based on values
- Showing support for each other during adverse times
- Mentor Program for new employees
- Communication Flow - information flows from the management team down to employees. When an event is of significant importance, employees are notified in a timely and consistent manner.
- Events are held that foster interaction and fun

- Opportunities are created to engage in the culture.
- Embrace mistakes as opportunities to improve
- Physical workspaces are engaging
- Capacity and work-life balance issues are addressed
- Play and exercise/wellness are encouraged
- Feedback mechanisms are put in place and monitored

100% LOVE in Action: Happiness for Haven

In October of 2016, the County participated for the first time in the Gorge Happiness Month program. As part of the activities, the County collected household items at various departments which were then donated to Haven, a local organization serving victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

100% LOVE in Action: Ellie the Wasco County Therapy Dog

Wasco County Community Corrections has a 10-year-old Schoodle dog named Ellie who acts as the office therapy dog. Ellie offers emotional relief to law enforcement officers and their staff and is useful during interviews with clients. Ellie has initiated contact with visitors in distress and has also been a morale boost for our own staff.

What it looks like: 100% LOVE in action!

Visually

- Logo
- Website
- Vision, mission and core values are posted in each department
- PowerPoint presentation and County branding
- Signage into the County that is nicer and includes logo - more like what you see coming into a city/town
- County swag, like Hydro Flask with logo on it or shirts with logo embroidered on it
- Department colors that would be worn on certain days
- Wasco County float in local parades
- 100% LOVE buttons are being worn
- Positive interactions among employees and with citizens

Verbally

- Talk about it in staff meetings – discuss the culture and our practice of it. Where did we succeed in living out the culture? Where can we improve? How can we refresh our understanding of the culture and values?
- Using terms from readings, strategic planning and culture guide in our daily language
- Honesty
- Laughter!
- Praising – frequent and sincere
- Cheerleading/advocacy
- Offering assistance
- Tone – respectful, professional, supportive, optimistic
- Communication – more open, flows both ways, happens sooner rather than later, etc.
- Talk through challenges without blame and how to solve

Actions

- Figure out how to host an “all-county retreat” – perhaps half day sessions over a 3-day period that would allow every employee to participate.
- Employees act as Cultural Ambassadors
- People participate in training
- October Happiness month
- There are county events (BBQ, Holiday Potluck, Ice Cream Social etc.) and employees participate
- Yearly training on culture

- Quick service at the counter
- Taking time to educate the customer when we can't serve them quickly or give an answer they want
- Flexibility
- Provide random treats
- Behavior - be humble, resilient, gracious, resourceful, professional, reasonable
- Body language awareness
- Having fun!
- Working together – seek teamwork
- Cross training
- Pot lucks / brown bags

Written

- Logo
- Love notes and notecards
- Culture Guide
- Employee handbook
- More communication, better communication.
- The tone of our correspondence. Softer, more collaborative.
- Emails - tone and more detailed communication
- Website - language that reflects our culture, content that helps citizens
- Core values on a small sign for each desk

How do we measure it?

“You can't manage what you don't measure” is a somewhat trite but true statement. To keep ourselves honest about how the culture is doing, we'll implement the tools below to garner feedback and measure our progress.

- Annual survey
- Employee reviews
- Feedback loop
- Exit interviews
- Citizen interactions
- Partner agency feedback/relationships

Building culture is a journey

Our culture of respect, compassion, accountability and transparency:

- Is our safe place – it creates trust.
- Is our immune system – it creates resiliency.
- Is a fertile ground for all possibilities – it creates innovation.
- Is the foundation for our strategic plan – it creates stability.

Everything we do is impacted by our culture – **everything**. We should invest in it, support it, grow it and 100% LOVE it.