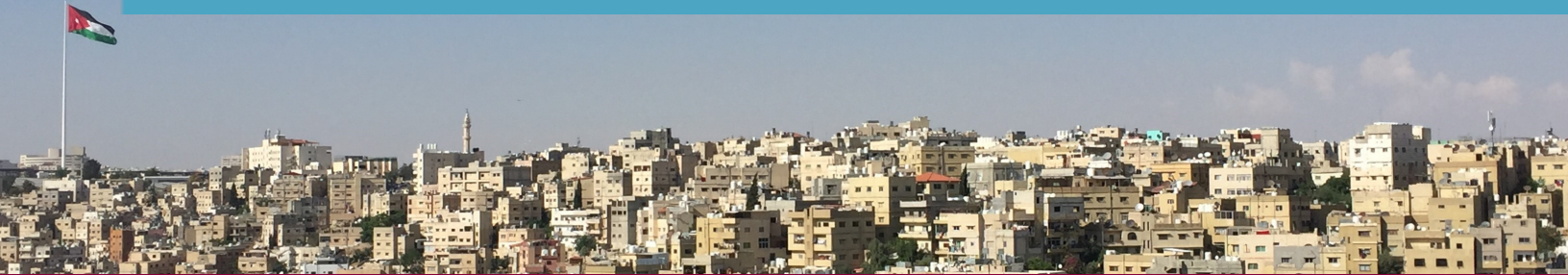


Learning in Partnership

Creating a Vision

Municipal Strategic Planning in Jordan



The Jordan Municipal Support Project (JMSP) is a 6-year project (2017-2023) funded by Global Affairs Canada, implemented by FCM with the support of Canadian municipal partners. The project primarily focuses on improving municipal governance and service delivery (solid waste management) in municipalities across the Central and Southern regions of Jordan, with a lens on community engagement, gender, and social inclusion.

This is one of a series of stories that highlight the contributions of the Canadian municipalities to the project. Four municipalities provided technical assistance on strategic planning: Yorkton, Saskatchewan; Sylvan Lake, Alberta; Colchester, Nova Scotia; and the District of Squamish, British Columbia.

On Common Ground

When the Jordanians first met their Canadian municipal partners, it seemed like they were worlds apart. Local governments in Jordan were not accustomed to strategic planning; they had few resources and many challenges. They assumed that Canadian municipalities, conversely, had many resources and few challenges.

The municipalities, however, were more alike than they seemed. The Jordanian municipal partners, much like Yorkton and Sylvan Lake, are small municipalities with populations of around 20,000 inhabitants. When the Yorkton representatives explained that they had few staff, limited resources, and a council that doesn't always agree, they began to find common ground with their Jordanian counterpart.

When it came to strategic planning, the Canadians could relate to the challenges the Jordanians were facing. They had difficulties with long-term planning, shifting priorities, and planning based on goals rather than the available budget. The Canadian municipal partners drew on their own experiences to help their Jordanian peers envision the future of their communities and design the roadmap to get there.



Dissecting the Plan

To share their experience with Jordanian partners, the team at Yorkton had to first go back to their own strategic plan and reflect on the process.

“We took our plan and worked backwards. We dissected what we had in front of us to work with,” said Jessica Matsala, Director of Legislation and Procedures at Yorkton.

Using Yorkton’s plans as a template, and consulting additional resources, they developed a step-by-step Guide to Municipal Strategic Planning. The Guide was simple, without a lot of technical detail, so that the process was easy to explain and to follow. Over the course of a year, the Jordanian partners were guided through the steps of the strategic planning process.

Strategic planning process

1. Carry out a SWOT analysis
2. Craft the mission, vision, goals, and objectives
3. Develop the draft strategic plan
4. Consult municipal staff and council
5. Consult the community
6. Revise the strategic plan and seek council approval
7. Develop the operational plan

The process was designed so that the Canadian municipal partners and the JMSP team would provide periodic guidance and direction to the Jordanian partners, and then leave them to complete their “homework” at each step. In this way, the Jordanian municipalities led their own data collection, consultations, and planning. The outcome of the process was not only a written strategic plan. The municipalities were equipped with the tools and knowledge to develop their own strategic plans, update them in the future, and provide peer support to other Jordanian municipalities to do the same.



The Bigger Picture

The Yorkton team conducted a series of 2-day workshops with the Jordanian municipalities to guide them to craft their vision, mission, goals, and objectives. One of the biggest challenges was breaking away from their day-to-day work and thinking about the future.

“They wanted to jump ahead of the vision and get to where the rubber hits the road – doing the work, how to pay for it,” said Darcy McLeod, Director of Recreation and Community Services in Yorkton. **“We encouraged them to think about what your community wants to look like.”**



In the workshops, Darcy and Jessica guided the elected officials and staff to do an initial brainstorming of the vision and mission for their municipality. The Jordanian partners were encouraged to think beyond activities and see the bigger picture. Using the example of roads, they were shown that it is not just about pavement but rather accessibility for residents.

The Yorkton team advised the partners to set strategic priorities broadly enough so they will continue to be relevant after a change in council, and to involve the community in the process. Darcy engrained the idea that the strategic plan helps to focus on what matters and then to allocate resources accordingly.

“What you’re doing today should fit in the plan. If it doesn’t fit, you have hard questions to ask... You have to reconsider why you are doing it,” Darcy explained.

In the workshops, the Jordanian partners articulated the municipality’s vision, mission, goals and strategic pillars. With the JMSP team’s support, they validated the plans with their council and communities.

Vision Statements

We seek to make the **Mo’ab Municipality** an organized, modern, and smart area with an environmentally friendly and vital spirit, which takes pride in its heritage and genuineness.

Ayl is a distinguished municipality with sustainable development and advanced services.

Sheehan is a safe, healthy municipality with a developed, attractive environment that meets the needs of the population

Back to Reality

Once the Jordanian municipalities had defined where they wanted to go, the next challenge was to detail how to get there – they had to make the strategic plans operational. Representatives from Yorkton, Sylvan Lake, Colchester, and the District of Squamish, were paired with Jordanian municipalities to provide advice on developing their operational plans. The Jordanian municipal partners were guided on how to break down their objectives into concrete activities, resources, timelines, and indicators.

Councillor Teresa Rilling drew on the strategic planning process in her municipality, Sylvan Lake. She asked the partners to reflect on whether their plan is realistic, attainable, and measurable. The Councillor emphasized the important division of roles between council and administration – governance and operations – and keeping council out of the weeds of the details.

“We as council create a strategic plan that is concise, realistic, and translatable to an operational plan,” Councillor Rilling said. **“Then council has to trust the staff to carry it out.”**

The main advice that the Canadian municipal practitioners provided was to reduce the scope of the plans to be achievable with the resources available. It is a challenge that CAO Linda Glenday of the District of Squamish knows all too well. The strategic plan that her municipal council developed was very ambitious. The scope was too wide, and she had to cut it down by a third to be achievable. Similarly, Linda could see that the Jordanian strategic plans were too ambitious and they would need to prioritize.

“Pick your top four areas that you want to move the dial on. Then put the guardrails on,” Linda advised.



The Rubber Hits the Road

With their roadmap in place, the Jordanian municipalities moved to designing an initiative that would advance one of their objectives. A key element of the process was to engage the community in the initiative’s design. The Jordanian municipalities carried out consultations with community stakeholders through various means – social media, in-person meetings, and focus group discussions. In most cases, the final initiative designs were much different from what the municipality had envisioned.

In the municipality of Ayl, the community rejected the first proposed location of a new park. Instead, the initiative was transformed into the rehabilitation of an existing park, adding an inclusive community centre that will also serve as a learning centre on good solid waste management practices. Merging the concepts of environment and community spaces, the project contributed to two of Ayl’s strategic objectives.

Ripple Effect

The Municipality of Ayl was considered an early adopter of the strategic planning process. The Yorkton team mentored them through the process, and they were one of the first municipalities to finalize their strategic plan and get council approval. When the municipality of Al Sharah was added to the project, nearby Ayl was invited to show them the ropes. The mentee became the mentor.

The team in Ayl conveyed what they had learned and helped Al Sharah craft its own vision, mission, and goals. Even though Al Sharah joined the project late, they were able to develop their strategic plan and initiate more quickly. The community has opted for an initiative to install solar panels on the municipal building.



“ The amount that we learned helps us to this day in our work. In my department, everything we have is linked to the strategic plan, all because of this process. It taught me how to talk about it, how to present it, and how important it is. ”

– Darcy McLeod, Yorkton, SK

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