

Strategic Planning Frequently Asked Questions

What is Strategic Planning?

A process where an organization's leadership

- defines mission and goals
- agrees on strategy

A disciplined process with the following steps:

- Ask a series of questions
- Test assumptions
- Gather current data
- Anticipate future environment
- Make decisions/choices re: What is most important for success?

Strategic planning requires:

- Vision for the future
- Strategy to get there
- Organizational capacity to implement

Why is strategic planning important?

Strategic planning gives you the opportunity to:

- Reconnect with vision and mission of the organization
- Increase ownership of organization
- Meet changing needs
- Define success together
- Ensure that you are all going in the same direction

What are the important components of a strategic plan?

1. Mission
2. Programs
3. Resources
4. Evaluation

"If you don't know where you are going, it doesn't matter which way you go"
—Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

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What are some of the action steps in a typical planning process?

- Gather relevant information: SWOT analysis/Needs Assessment/Community Input
- Review/update mission, vision, values
- Determine best strategies to reach your mission (goals, objectives, action steps)
- Develop budget/resource plan & evaluation measures
- Implement the plan
- Evaluate your work and incorporate what you learned into the next plan

How does planning usually take place?

- Board committee formed to steer process
- Consultant can help facilitate
- Can take 3 months to 1 year
- Usually includes a board retreat to make key decisions
- Annual cycle of planning, budgeting, implementing, evaluating

How can we make our plan a living document?

- Identify a steward or steward committee for the plan
- Develop benchmarks or milestones to track your progress
- Monitor your goals regularly
- Organize board committees around strategic goals
- Organize your meetings around strategic goals
- Tie CEO expectations to strategic plan
- Revisit the plan annually

Why is everybody making such a big deal out of evaluation?

Evaluation helps you:

- know if you are effective
- make improvements to your programs
- make good decisions about allocating resources
- hold each other accountable
- market your programs
- attract funders who want to invest in proven strategies
- take risks

What kinds of evaluation questions should we be asking ourselves?

- What's working?
- What's not working?
- What did we learn?
- What changed as a result of our efforts?
- What different approaches should we consider?