

Strategic Planning Processes

Benefits of Strategic Planning:

- Clearly define the purpose of the organization and establish realistic goals and objectives consistent with that mission in a defined timeframe within the organization's capacity for implementation
- Communicate those goals and objectives to the organization's constituents
- Develop a sense of ownership of the plan
- Ensure the most effective use is made of the organization's resources by focusing the resources on the key priorities
- Provide a base from which progress can be measured and establish a mechanism for informed change when needed
- Bringing together everyone's best and most reasoned efforts have important value in building a consensus about where an organization is going
- Provides a clear focus of organization, producing more efficiency and effectiveness
- Bridges staff and board of directors
- Builds strong teams in the board and the staff
- Provides the glue that keeps the board together
- Produces great satisfaction among planners a common vision
- Increase productivity from increased efficiency and effectiveness
- Solves major problems

Process of Strategic Planning

1. Where are we now?

Internal/external assessment: An analysis and evaluation of internal conditions and external data and factors that affect the organization

SWOT Analysis:

- a. Internal **S**trengths:
 - b. Internal **W**eaknesses:
 - c. External **O**pportunities:
 - d. External **T**hreats:
- PLUS:

Identification and surveying of customers and stakeholders

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT - In order to identify the strengths and weakness and evaluate the agency's capacity to respond to issues, problems, and opportunities, ask the following questions:

Where has the agency been?

- Have the needs of the clients been met?
- Has the service been of the highest quality?
- What has changed internally—has the agency improved, status quo, declined?
- What has been accomplished, what remains?

Where is the agency now?

- Identify current services; does this structure work, what are regulatory statutes?
- Do existing activities support each other, are all needed?
- What is being done well, poorly?
- Are performance measures established, are they being met?
- What does public and consumers think of the services? How does agency compare to benchmarks?
- Are planning, budgeting, and other management efforts integrated?

What are the strengths and weaknesses?

- What strengths or advantages exist? How can these be built on
- What weaknesses or disadvantages exist? How can these be overcome?
- What are the constraints in meeting consumer's needs?
- How are the needs of the consumer changing? What opportunities for positive change exist? Can the plan accommodate change?

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT - identifies the opportunities and threats present in the current environment and anticipates changes in the future environment

What is the current environment?

- What is the agencies financial status?
- What elements of the environment are relevant to the agency? How?
- Which are likely to facilitate or impede the agency?
- What are the major issues or problems and why are they important?
- What events or issues have captured the attention of the community? How do these affect the agency?

How may the environment differ in the future?

- How does revenue look for the next year? Next five years?
- What forces are at work that might affect the environment and are trends likely to continue or change?

- What major issues exist and how could they affect the agency?
- What implications do future forces hold for the agency? Which is most crucial?
- What are the most likely scenarios for the future?

NOTE: A small agency may not have the resources or need to do an extensive internal/external assessment. Use the above questions as a guide, but major data collection may not be required. An alternative process is to convene key staff, board members, clients, and related agencies and brainstorm a list of relevant internal and external factors.

CUSTOMER AND STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION - those directly or indirectly using agency services or those directly or indirectly affected by the agency's actions

Identify and understand customers and stakeholders

- Who receives the agency services (populations)?
- Whose interests are served by the actions of the agency?
- What do consumers need from the agency? What do they want?
- Do consumers have other choices of providers, what are they, what is the market like?
- Who are the stakeholders and what results do they expect?

To find what consumers and stakeholders think and want, use:

- Written or telephone surveys
- Focus groups
- One on one interviews
- Comment forms
- Consumer/stakeholder advisory committees
- Public meetings

NOTE: Once data has been gathered be sure to use it. Problems that have been identified need to be addressed in the strategic plan.

2. Where Do We Want To Be?

- Mission Statement
- Vision Statement
- Principles
- Goals
- Objectives

Mission Statement - a brief comprehensive statement of purpose of an agency

Develop or review the mission statement by asking:

- Who are we? Why does the agency exist? What problems do we address?
- What do we do? What functions or service are provided?
- For whom do we do it? What information came from the client/stakeholder identification?
- Why do we do it? Do current agency expectations differ from original purpose? What are the needs and problems to be addressed?
- Why are public resources devoted to this effort?
- Be sure to revise the mission statement as necessitated by a change in agency focus or operation

Example: () fosters the health, safety, and productivity of individuals, families, and the community by providing quality and culturally-responsive mental health, addiction, and related social services.

Vision Statement - a compelling, conceptual image of the future

Conceived through partnership with all levels of agency, a focal point for everyone in agency

- Brief
- Inspiring and challenging
- Descriptive of future service
- Enduring
- What are agency's aspirations? How does the agency wish to be known?
- How will the services improve the quality of life for clients?

Example: () vision is to nurture a healthy community free from the negative consequences of Substance Abuse by providing children, adolescents, adults, and families effective, state-of-the-art treatment services.

Principles - factors that drive the conduct of the agency and guide the development and implementation of all policies and procedures.

- Criteria to guide decision-making
- Express basic beliefs about the conditions under which people work best
- Reflects values and philosophy of directors, management, and staff
- Expressed as responsibilities to clients, stakeholders, and community
- Focus on three areas
 - People - The way clients and staff are treated
 - Processes - The way agency managed, decisions made, and services provided
 - Performance - Expectations concerning the agency's responsibilities and quality of its services

Example: Agency Principles:

Employees - We care about each other, encourage growth, recognize accomplishments

Clients - Our first priority is to provide the best service to our clients

Quality - We do our best the first time

Improvement - We do our best better the next time

Integrity - We are committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior

Teamwork - We provide the best services by working together as a team

Leadership - We lead by example and leadership exists at all levels

Management - We manage by fact

Measurement - Our performance measures are client-focused and outcome-based

Goals - the strategic direction and improvements associated with the activities of the agency.

- Goals are in harmony with and clarify agency vision, mission, and principles
- Goals address priorities and the results of I/E assessment and respond to strategic issues
- Typically remain unchanged barring environmental change and encompass a relatively long period of time
- Address gaps between current and desired level of service
- Goals will be challenging but realistic and achievable
- The process of developing goals:
 - Establish the process: participants, timeframes, and expectations
 - Review data
 - Incorporate client and stakeholder feedback
 - Analyze gaps in service, do the current services serve client and community needs?
 - Set direction to achieve desired results, what needs change, development?
 - Draft and refine goals
 - Select goals to include in Strategic Plan

Example:

To increase the number of clients who successfully complete treatment

To develop the capacity and implement women's programming

To develop increased funding to expand treatment services

To increase employee skills in working with special populations

Objectives - specific and measurable targets for accomplishing goals

- **Specific**-reflect accomplishments which are desired not ways to accomplish them(objectives generate strategies and actions)
- **Measurable**-in order to determine whether accomplished
- **Attainable**-don't make them impossible
- **Results-oriented**-specify a specific result
- **Time-bound**-specify a relatively short time for meeting objectives (few weeks to no more than a year)

Formulating Objectives:

- Review the missions and goals-Has a clear mission been established? Have stakeholders been identified? Is the intent of goals understood?
- Decide what results are wanted-What specific/measurable parts can be achieved? What variables might influence the result? Are specific items mandated by legislation?
- Set a timeframe for achieving results-What is a reasonable amount of time? How critical is action? Do federal/state guidelines establish timeframes?
- Build in Accountability-
 - Review performance measures and targets already set for
 - Identify additional performance measures
 - Determine targets for each objective
 - Assess how progress will be measured

Example:

There will be an increase of 15% in clients who successfully complete treatment
Within 3 months develop infrastructure for serving women
Identify needs and resources necessary to seek greater funding
Identify staff training needs

3. How Do We Get There?

Action Plan - a detailed description of the strategies and steps used to implement a Strategic Plan

May include assumptions which clarify the expectations on which the strategic plan is based, e.g. “based on a worsening economy we expect problems to worsen and demand to increase”.

Developing an Action Plan:

- Formulating Strategies - Brainstorm and then determine how to achieve the desired results
 - What options are available?
 - What are the costs, benefits, and possible effects of each possible action?
 - Select the most efficient and effective strategy
 - Research other successful programs
 - What steps are necessary to implement this strategy and how long will each step take?
- Resource allocation - Determining and allotting the resources and assets necessary to carry out a strategy within priorities
 - Are the resources required (budget, personnel, training, facilities, and other equipment) available?
 - What will be the fiscal impact of this course of action?

Once the priorities, costs, benefits, possible constraints, timeframes, and resources are analyzed, select the best strategies

Then identify the steps necessary to successfully implement the strategy in order to achieve the objective

- Putting the Action Plan Together - production of actual program- Geared towards identifying operations, procedures, and processes
 - Assigns responsibility for implementing each step
 - Details the steps that must be finished to complete the plan
 - Expected start and finish date of each step
 - Determine the fiscal impact and needed resources to carry out plan
 - Plan becomes the basis for developing requests for funding

4. How Do We Track Our Progress

- Tracking Systems - systems (documents) developed to monitor progress, compile management data, and keep the Action Plan on track and to include statement of :
 - Goals
 - Objectives
 - Performance Measures
 - Action Plan (who does)
 - Action to Date
 - Current Status (on schedule, delayed, ahead of schedule)
 - Comments

Report progress and non-progress

- Monitoring Performance Measures - Comparison of actual performance, as reported on the monitoring document, to the “planned performance”
For each performance measure ask:
 - How does the reported performance compare to previous reports?
 - Is the variance relevant to achievement of a goal? Outcome?
 - Are external factors inhibiting achievement of a goal?
 - How will data collection be verified for accuracy?
 - What kind of unintended results have come from the strategy?
 - How will you use the data to evaluate, improve, and change services?
- Reporting the Results - determine guidelines concerning how performance information is collected and reported
 - External Reporting to:*
 - Stakeholders
 - Policy Maker
 - Contractors
 - Include:*
 - Targets and actual performance
 - Explain when performance varies from previous levels
 - Understandable to reader
 - Awareness not to disclose more information than useful
 - Internal Reporting -*
 - Performance reporting
 - Budgeting and planning information
 - Show staff how they are doing, ask for and offer explanations
 - Confront sub-standard performance, what can be done differently?

5. The Strategic Plan

The strategic plan is a practical, action-oriented guide based on an examination of internal and external factors that directs goal-setting and resource allocation to achieve meaningful results over time

Features of a Successful Strategic Plan -

- Is the result of a planning process that has support of directors, management, and all agency staff
- Contains a mission statement that clarifies the agency's services
- Contains a challenging vision
- Contains clear, challenging, but realistic and achievable goals
- Contains SMART Objectives
- Contains performance measures that accurately reflect key results of the goals