

The Basics of a Strategic Plan

What is a Strategic Plan?

- A road map
- A tool for identifying and asking the right questions
- A clear articulation of vision, goals and objectives (for internal and external uses)
- A basis for on-going decision-making
- An evaluation and accountability tool

A Strategic Plan Must

- Be rooted in the organization's core values and a powerful and specific vision of what will change if the organization is successful;
- Be built from a clear understanding of the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges;
- Become completely integrated into the work of the organization (it must be used – not just written); and,
- Change over time, reflecting a responsive organization and an active evaluation process.

Necessary Components

A strategic plan starts with a vision statement. It then provides a complete list of the projects/activities of the organization (internal and external) in the timeframe represented by the plan. For each of those projects/activities, the plan should include:

- A brief, outcome-based description (what it will accomplish);
- The timeframe in which it will be done;
- The key dates and deadlines;
- How it will be funded each year;
- What partnerships (if any) are required, or desired, to make it happen;
- Who has primary responsibility for making the project happen (a staff person, board member or other volunteer);
- Who will play support roles for the project;
- What the board's role in the project is; and,
- How you will know it has been done, and whether it is successful.