

Strategic Planning – Initial Diagnosis

Initial Diagnosis

Information to establish

- What created the need to “do something”
- Broad problem or concern – why did you call me?
- Commitment to doing something – are you and board committed, do you have time to do – people to show?
- Psychological readiness
- Resources available – financial problem? Don’t want to get involved with dying organizations.
- Barriers that need to be overcome before beginning – low is organization – getting doing
- What is the best approach to pursue (see later)

Ideally, the facilitator helps a client to discover objective information, better understand the situation to be faced, and to achieve a self-diagnosis

Important diagnosis considerations

- Sometimes clients have to be “backed up” to get at the root of what is going on
 - What problem are they tackling?
 - Who has been involved? – Do we need to bring in other stakeholders?
 - What alternatives have been looked at?
- Sometimes you and your skills are not what’s needed (ex. May need accountant instead)
 - Help the client to get what’s needed

Agree to facilitate top 1-3 strategic issues

Five purposeful activities

- Learning
- Research
- Planning and design
- Evaluation
- Operating and supervising

Systems – need to evaluate the planning process

Purpose of this session:

- Define Step 1 of the strategic planning process
- Describe the desired planning outcomes
- Review the process guidelines

Step 1: Initiating and agreeing on a strategic planning process

The purpose of Step 1 is to develop an initial agreement among key decision makers and opinion leaders about the overall strategic planning effort and main planning tasks. This represents a “Plan for the Plan.”

This initial agreement is one of the most important steps in the whole strategic planning process. In Step 1, many of the commitments to produce a good process and plan are developed.

Desired planning outcomes

The “Plan for Planning” should produce agreement on several issues:

- The purpose and worth of the strategic planning effort
- The organizations, units, groups, and persons who should be involved as well as how and when in the process they should be involved
- The specific steps to be followed
- The format and timing of reports – what type of report (document) does org. expect
- The awareness of any important limitations or boundaries on the effort
- The commitment of necessary resources to proceed with the effort – commitment of members
- The role(s) of the consultant/planning coordinator – my role: what I will do-facilitate what they will do – do logistics, take part in process, write final report

Process Guidelines

1. Some person or group must initiate and champion the process.
2. It may be desirable for the initiators to do a quick assessment of the organization’s readiness to engage in strategic planning.
3. Some persons or group must sponsor the process and give it legitimacy.
4. Decide whether a detailed, jointly negotiated initial agreement is needed. – contract with large org.
5. Form a strategic planning task force or coordinating committee, if one is needed. – Small org. – no need
6. If a coordinating committee is formed, use it as a mechanism for consultation, negotiation, problem solving or buffering among organizations, units, groups or persons involved.
7. The process is likely to flow more smoothly if the coordinating committee and other policy boards involved are effective policy making bodies.
8. Form a strategic planning team if one is needed – people who do logistics
9. Key decision makers may need orientation and training about the nature, purpose and process of strategic planning before they can negotiate an initial agreement.

10. A sequence of “initial” agreements among successively expanding groups of key decision makers may be necessary before a full scale strategic planning effort can proceed.
11. In complex situations, development of an initial agreement will culminate in the first big decision point.

Strategic Planning plan for planning exercise

Situation

The purpose of this exercise is to provide workshop participants with practical experience in planning and designing a system whose purpose is to conduct strategic planning.

Instructions

1. Decide what role (group of people) you will represent for the purposes of the exercise. (For example, you could be a group of business people and city leaders concerned about recent economic setbacks your community has experienced; or a group of concerned citizens worried about a rise in juvenile problems in your neighborhood; or the faculty in a county Extension office desiring to have more control over their future)
2. Provide brief background information on the situation for your group. Try to keep things relatively uncomplicated.
3. The facilitator leads the process, using Worksheet 1: Profile of the Planning Effort as a guideline for facilitation. Enter information developed and decisions on the worksheet (1 hr.)
4. Conclude the exercise with a discussion of the expected role of the planning coordinator in strategic planning. Try to reach agreement on what role(s) the planning coordinator will play, what services the planning coordinator will (and will not) provide and the time commitment the facilitator will make. Try to agree also on what will be expected of the strategic plan coordinating committee and the strategic planning team (coordinates day-to-day processes and plan needs).

Suggestions

1. You will have about 80 minutes to complete the exercise. Budget your time accordingly and keep moving through all the steps.
2. It is acceptable to provide the major decisions for the planning system, and to leave more detailed decisions for the strategic plan coordinating committee and the strategic planning team to work out once they are in place.

Overview of strategic planning process

Strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide an organization and what it does.

It's a powerful tool that helps organizations figure out what's really important and what to do about it.

Worksheet 1 – Profile of the planning effort

1. Whose plan is it? The strategic plan is for:

- The whole organization.
- The whole organization and separate plans for major divisions, units, etc.
- Part of the organization (specify division, unit, program).
- Other, such as a community or county coalition (specify).

2. What period will the plan cover?

- 2 years
- 5 years
- 10 years
- Other, (specify)

3. What concerns, problems, or issues do you hope the plan will address? (Identify potential organizational issues for the purpose of gauging the energy of the members and the interest in designing a planning system)

4. What measures of effectiveness should be used to evaluate the success of the planning effort? (The final product is a useful strategic plan, all key stakeholders were involved, the process went smoothly.)

5. What is the purpose of this planning effort? (To figure out what is really important, to reach agreement on priority issues, to work together to address issues)

Worksheet 1, (continued)

6. Who is sponsoring the process? (Sponsors are individuals who legitimize the process. They are typically top leaders with prestige, power and authority to commit organizations and resources to strategic planning and to hold people accountable.)

7. Who is (are) the process champion(s)? Who is the primary champion who will manage the process? (Champions provide the energy and commitment to follow through. They are usually the people who have primary responsibility for coordinating the strategic planning process from day-to-day. They promote the process and model the kind of behavior they hope to get from other participants.)

8. What kind and size of team will work best in your organization? What does this mean for the composition of a strategic planning team? Who should be involved on the planning team? (The strategic planning team coordinates the day-to-day process and plan needs, and is responsible for developing the plan over time in cooperation with designated stakeholders.)

9. Who should be involved in the overall guidance and review of the plan? (The strategic planning coordinating committee sets process policy and direction and provides accountability and final review.)

Worksheet 1, (continued)

10. Are you using consultants or other resource experts?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If unsure, what kind of help do you need?

11. What type of written plan do you envision?

- Short executive summary
- Full strategic planning report
- Other (describe)

12. How many hours do you wish to give to planning meetings?

- 1 - 12
- 12 – 24
- 24 – 40
- 40+

13. What is the expected time frame for the planning process?

- 6 months
- 12 months
- Other

