

Review of Strategic Planning Best Practices

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A number of references on strategic planning were researched. Although there is no universal approach or standard template for developing a strategic plan, there is considerable common ground among these sources which can be considered best practices in conducting a strategic planning process:

- Prepare to plan – develop a “plan for the plan”
- Research what other organizations are doing well
- Identify all stakeholders and solicit meaningful input in various ways during all stages of the planning process – create a sense of stakeholder ownership of the plan
- Form and utilize a committee with broad stakeholder representation to assist in coordination of the planning process and to develop plan drafts
- Conduct an “environmental scan” – assess data, identify trends and challenges, and analyze organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis)
- Seek continuous improvement based on assessment of needs, and challenge the organization, but within realistic parameters – stretch the organization, but do not set it up to fail
- Develop compelling and clear vision and mission statements with input from the organization’s governing body
- Ensure that the plan reflects a balance of organizational and stakeholder perspectives
- Identify proactive priorities and implementation strategies (or goals and objectives) focused on the organization’s vision and mission
- What you set out to achieve should be SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and timebound)
- Identify performance indicators or measures for monitoring, with incremental and final targets
- Develop action plans – the details of who does what by when (the action plan can be a separate document)
- Have the plan approved by the organization’s governing body
- Communicate the final plan to all stakeholders
- Provide progress reports on plan implementation (e.g., a “balanced scorecard”)
- Provide for periodic review of the plan – the plan should not be set in stone
- Live the plan – have it available at meetings for reference, and align budgeting, operations, other planning efforts, and employee performance expectations with it
- Acknowledge successes