

Strategic Planning: Definitions

A disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it. (Bryson)

A systematic process through which an organization agrees on—and builds commitment among key stakeholders to—priorities which are essential to its mission and responsive to the operating environment. (Allison & Kaye)

What Makes Planning *Strategic*?

1. Operational effectiveness is not strategy.
2. Strategy rests on unique activities.
“Competitive strategy is about being different. It means deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value.”
3. A sustainable strategic position requires trade-offs.
“Simply put, a trade-off means that more of one thing necessitates less of another. . . . The essence of strategy is choosing what *not* to do.”
4. Fit drives both competitive advantage and sustainability.
It is critical that all the organization’s components work together and support each other.

from Porter

The process is *strategic* because it involves choosing how best to respond to the circumstances of a dynamic and sometimes hostile environment. All living plants respond to the environment, but as far as we know they do not choose how to respond. Nonprofit organizations have many choices in the face of changing client or customer needs, funding availability, competition, and other factors. Being strategic requires recognizing these choices and committing to one set or responses instead of another.

from Allison & Kaye

Sources:

- Allison, M. & Kaye, J. (2005). *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations: A Practical Guide and Workbook*. New York : Wiley.
- Bryson, J. (1988) *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*. San Francisco : Jossey-Bass.
- Porter, M. E. (November–December 1996) “What is Strategy?” *Harvard Business Review*. 61–78.

The Mission Statement

An effective mission statement *focuses discussion on what is important.* (Bryson)

Berthoud/Greene Consultants LLC believes that a mission statement should clearly identify the following characteristics:

- Purpose
- Customers
- Business
- Values
- Uniqueness

Please provide *brief* answers to each of the following questions. (Because this exercise involves setting priorities, it's important to be brief. And don't worry about getting the wording of your response just right.)

1. What basic social or political need do we exist to address?

2. Whom do we serve? (Be as specific as possible.)

3. How do we serve our customers? (Answers might include: convening, research, informing, advocacy, etc. Don't list specific *programs* here, such as "publish a newsletter" or "hold a conference.")

4. What motivates and inspires our work?

5. How are we different than other organizations doing somewhat similar things? In other words, what makes us unique?

6. And a question to help you think about your vision: Imagine that in 50 years, your organization is successful beyond your wildest dreams. What would be different (for your clients or members, for the community, and/or for the country, etc.) because your organization existed? What would have been accomplished?

Strategic Planning Process Overview

Key Questions	Planning Steps
Are we ready to plan?	Gather support for the planning process and assess readiness
	Formally commit to the planning process
	Create the planning team
Where are we now?	Conduct the organization assessment (environment scan, situation assessment)
	Review, discuss, and state the organizational mission and vision
Where do we want to be?	Identify desired outcomes and develop goals
How will we get there?	Develop strategies
Who will do what by when to implement the plan?	Draft and approve the plan, including budget implications
	Develop specific action plans, including who will do what by when and accountability expectations
How are we doing?	Monitor implementation of plan
	Conduct regular reviews

Organizational Assessment

