

Basic Principles of Strategic Plans

Strategic planning requires taking a thorough look at:

- Who you are as an organization — your resources, capacities, advantages, disadvantages, etc.
- Your operating environment — your clients, supporters, opportunities, threats, etc.

Once you know where you stand, you may start creating your vision for the future and assembling a strategic plan for achieving that vision.

Now, how can we understand the term “strategic plan”?

Nouns

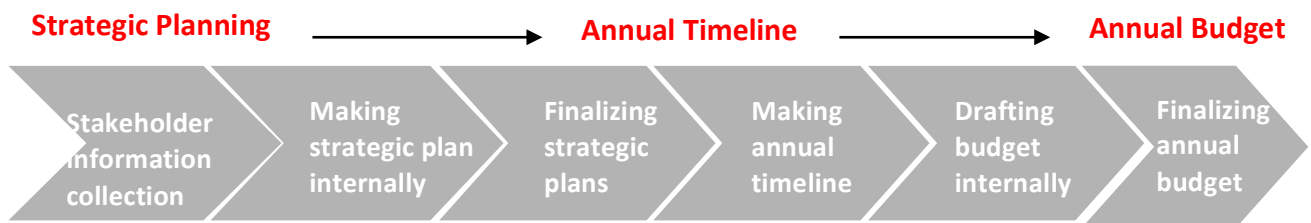
- The most **important document** for an organization;
- Defines **who** you are, **what** you want to realize, and **how** you want to realize it;
- Connects your **work** and your **vision** together.

Verbs

- **Developing** and **translating** strategic thoughts into a written document;
- **Reaching consensus** among all staff and volunteers;
- **Assessing** the organization’s capacity and making tough decisions for its development.

The Importance of Strategic Plans

- ✓ A strategic plan can help to prevent mission drift, by serving as a guide by which you can assess whether your current work is helping you realize your final vision.
- ✓ A strategic plan can strengthen your program management skills. The plan is not an end in itself, but is actually a tool that serves as the foundation of strong program management. For example, you can use your strategic plan to create timelines and budgets.



- ✓ A strategic plan can clearly describe what you are *not* going to do. Small NGOs have very limited resources; therefore, they cannot do everything at once or do everything that they want to do, so they have to make choices. Strategic planning can help us make these choices by identifying priority areas and what needs to come first.
- ✓ A strategic plan can bring your team together. Strategic planning is not something that the director of an organization does alone. Instead, it is a process that requires the *meaningful participation* of all of your staff to complete. Why? If you complete the plan alone, your staff and volunteers may not buy into it. You want to solicit everyone's opinions and participation when deciding the future direction of your organization:

	Without A Strategic Plan	Leader Makes the Strategic Plan	All Staff Make the Strategic Plan
Strategic thinkers	Not clear	Leaders	All staff
Input to Strategic Planning	Low	Medium	High, but controllable
Output of Strategic Plan	Stays around the changing strategic thoughts in mind	Strategic plan with strong characteristics of the leaders	Plan document that combines the thoughts of all of the staff
Strategic Direction	Not specified, easy to drift, do whatever comes to mind	Specified, but it costs a lot to communicate with the staff	Leaders and staff reached consensus, won't drift easily
Input of Staff	Quite lost	Obedience	Commitment
Strategic Actions	Disordered	Weak, resistance and simply obeying	Strong, high participation of staff