

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ACTION STRATEGIC PLANNING



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Jarle Crocker, PhD, Community Action Partnership
Natalie Kramer, MSW, NCRT, Community Action Partnership
Adrienne Rolka, California Community Action Partnership Association

A Comprehensive Guide to Community Action Strategic Planning
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This document is intended for use of Community Action Agencies and other CSBG Eligible Entities within the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Network.

California Community Action Partnership Association

The California Community Action Partnership Association (CalCAPA) empowers members through capacity building, representation and outreach. Founded in 1976, CalCAPA serves member Community Action Agencies (CAAs) and other Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funded organizations that deliver human services to economically disadvantaged families and children across California.

Community Action Partnership

The Community Action Partnership is the nonprofit, national membership organization representing the interests of the 1,000+ Community Action Agencies (CAAs) across the country that annually helps 17 million low-income Americans achieve economic security. Whether it's a Head Start program, weatherization, job training, housing, food bank, energy assistance, financial education, or any of the other 40-plus distinct programs, CAAs work to make America a better place to live.

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FOREWORD

Founding father Benjamin Franklin is quoted as saying, “By failing to prepare and plan, you are preparing to fail.” The great eastern philosopher Confucius stated, “A man who does not plan ahead will soon find trouble at his door.” These great thinkers convey the importance of having a plan whether as an individual or an organization.

With the release of Information Memorandum (IM) 138 by the federal Office of Community Services which established CSBG Organizational Standards 6.1 through 6.5 for both public and private Community Action Agencies, many of our agencies expressed concern about their strategic plans and if those plans would meet the standards. In fact, with five standards directly related and another six standards indirectly related, there are a total of 11 standards associated with strategic planning. CalCAPA, in an effort to meet the needs of its membership, partnered with the national Community Action Partnership to produce a guide that will not only assist California agencies, but it is our hope that this guide will serve as a tool for Community Action Agencies across our great Nation.

This strategic planning guide is technical yet practical. It will take the guess work out of establishing strategic plans that not only serve as a *living and breathing* document that guides the agency, but also one that will not only empower Community Action Agencies to successfully meet the standards set forth in IM 138, but exceed them! With the largest number of Community Action Agencies, we want to provide leadership nationally, and I trust this strategic planning guide will be a tool that will be a vital piece of every Community Action Agency’s tool box!

Until Poverty No Longer Exists,

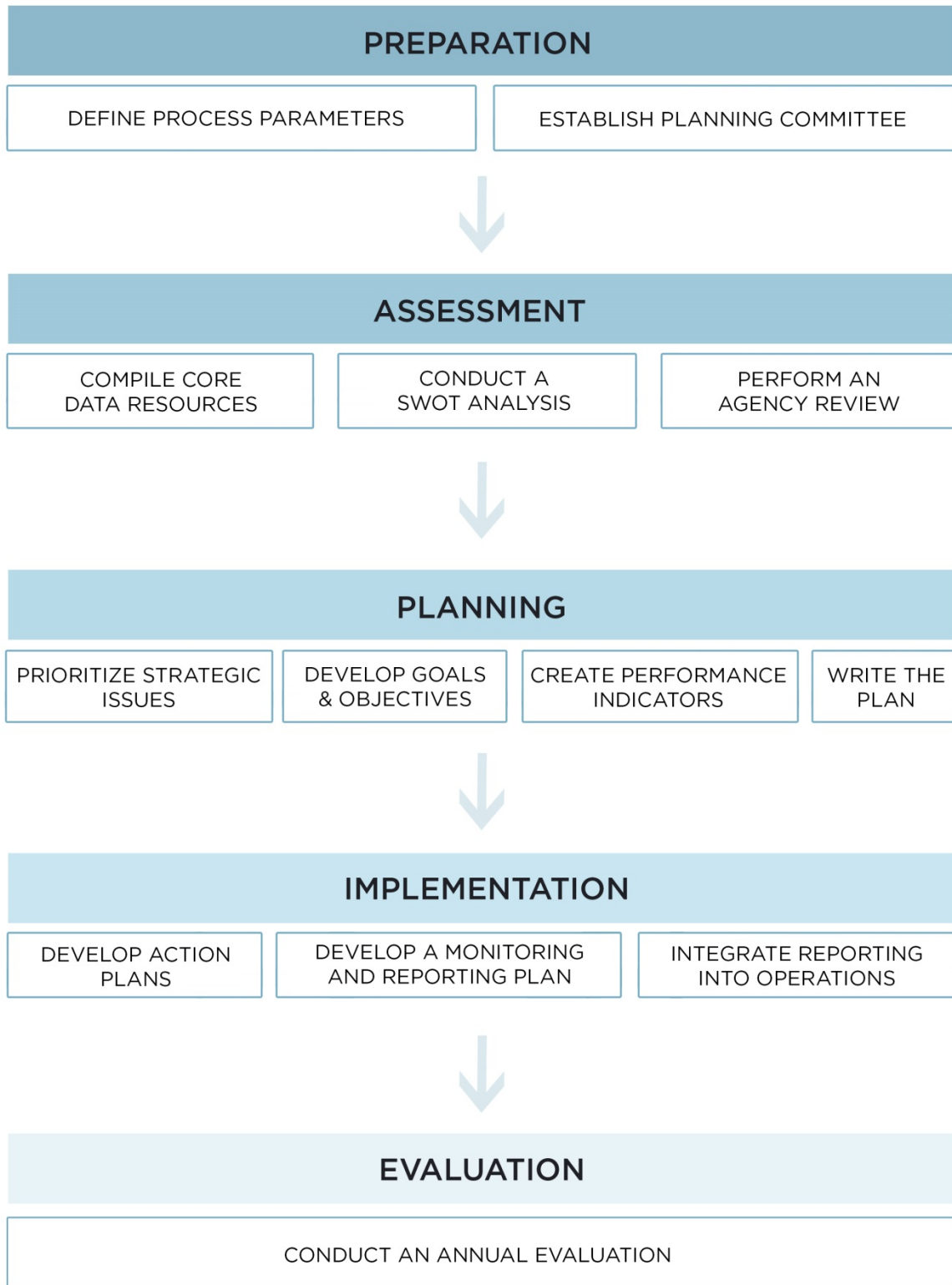
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A. Heath". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John A. Heath
Executive Director
CalCAPA

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FIGURE 1. COMMUNITY ACTION STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



Strategic Planning has greater importance today in Community Action because of the establishment of CSBG Organizational Standards as part of an enhanced system of accountability and performance management across the CSBG Network. The new Standards set the bar for what is minimally required of CAAs to ensure they have appropriate organizational capacity to deliver services to low-income individuals and communities. In this new era, strategic planning is the cornerstone of good management and governance.

About this Guide

This guide is designed to help Community Action Agencies (CAAs) navigate the strategic planning process and successfully plan, develop, implement and evaluate strategic plans. As a comprehensive capacity building resource, this guide can also be used to refresh an existing plan, train program managers and agency leadership or even develop a planning process for a community collaborative.

Although there is not a one-size fits all process for developing a strategic plan, there are fundamental stages that make up the strategic planning process. This guide will explore those stages, providing an array of tools and methods for conducting the process. Agencies should tailor the strategic planning process to their management needs and agency structures by using and adapting the tools and resources provided, as needed. With the amount of design choices and planning required, users are encouraged to read the guide all the way through before beginning a strategic planning process.

For comprehension and continuity, the main text of this guide will present just one of the many ways that the strategic planning process can be structured. In stages throughout the guide where there are alternatives to structuring the process, text boxes with those design options will be displayed to provide flexibility and adaptability of the framework presented. Tips on best practices are also highlighted in the text.

The guide begins with a basic overview of strategic planning and how it connects to other Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) planning processes and requirements. Each section that follows details a different stage of the strategic planning process as it corresponds to the Community Action Strategic Planning Process outlined on the preceding page (Figure 1). A number of online resources, references and worksheets to assist agencies with strategic planning can be found in the appendices at the end of the guide. The guide is intended to serve as a continuing reference source for agencies.

A Brief Overview of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a systematic, participatory process to manage long-term organizational change and growth. The process is proactive, not reactive – anticipating change while simultaneously stimulating it. The process is designed to assess an organization’s capacities and environment, clarify its mission, build a shared vision of the future, determine its priorities, set common goals for the entire organization, create action plans, focus energy and resources, measure results and evaluate and adjust the organization’s direction in response to evolving customer and community needs and a changing environment. In short, the process is about developing and implementing a strategic plan and then tracking its progress and evaluating its results.

The strategic plan itself is a road map to achieving a shared vision of the organization and/or community in 3-5 years. Day-to-day, the plan’s implementation guides an organization in fulfilling its mission, making decisions and allocating resources. Over the long term, the strategic plan acts as a blueprint for implementing changes that incrementally realize the organization’s vision. By planning for change, an organization can strategically chart its own growth and revitalization in a manner that improves its effectiveness, capacity and relevance.

It is essential to recognize what strategic planning is not. It is not a quick fix. Neither the process nor the plan is a magic bullet or panacea for everything that ails an organization— especially if the plan winds up on the shelf. Like many quality management efforts, strategic planning is a long-term investment with increasing returns over time. In other words, every plan must be accompanied by commitment and action if it is to achieve meaningful results.

While every situation is unique because of the methods used and process followed, there are core principles of good practice for strategic planning that transcend context:

Ensure leadership guides the process. Nothing will happen if the agency’s leadership is not driving the strategic planning process. Acquiescence to an outside mandate is not enough. Leadership has to be fully on board, as strategic planning usually involves organizational change and can be a sensitive process. The active participation of leadership—that is, buy-in that goes beyond mere verbal endorsement—is crucial. Absent their vision and commitment, and the certainty that funds and resources will be available to implement action steps, others are unlikely to take the process seriously.

Base decisions on data. Data provides the information leaders need to prioritize and create strategic plan goals. In order to make the right choices, they need internal data (e.g. current and projected budget, customer satisfaction reports), research on the external environment (e.g. political, social and economic factors) and data from internal stakeholders (e.g. front line staff, program managers) and external stakeholders (e.g. community members, key partners). Information from outside stakeholders ensure the agency is doing the right things to serve the

community; while information from inside stakeholders ensure the agency has the right structure, processes and people to carry out its mission.

Engage stakeholders. Strategic planning provides an excellent opportunity to gather the views of the organization's staff, managers, funders and other stakeholders of the organization. It is an opportunity to strengthen relationships with key partners, customers and communities.

Acknowledging different stakeholders views during the strategic planning process, even if they are not accommodated, can lend legitimacy to and create greater buy-in for the resulting plan.

Learn from experience. Strategic planning is about listening and learning. It is essential to learn from past experience – basing future decisions on past evaluation findings. Evaluations and strategic planning should always be interlinked. It is also about learning from others' experience. There is often no need to reinvent the wheel, as other human services organizations have already learned a lot about what works. One way or another, every organization deals with challenges related to technology, capacity building, fundraising, etc. Whatever their specific goals and methods, all organizations must find ways to remain relevant, meet the needs of a changing client population and make the best use of available funds. Often, a solution that works for one can be successfully adapted by another.

Make hard choices. Strategic planning is about prioritizing. It is about letting things go; about avoiding the temptation to simply add to the shopping list. There may be a need to close down programs and perhaps have strategic funerals to celebrate elements of your work that have been good but are no longer a priority. In a changing environment, prioritization is crucial. Organizations must be proactive, not reactive, in creating change or end up being at the mercy of it.

Get staff ownership. Any organizational change, including strategic planning, is a human process of change. Some people will see themselves as winning; others losing. Adjustments will need to be made, especially by the staff that will ensure the new plan is implemented (or not). They have to be a part of the plan's development and believe in its value. Such participation can also have positive tradeoffs such as team building, improved organizational communication, and commitment to changing the organizational culture. Participation creates a sense of ownership in the process and ownership encourages commitment. Commitment to the plan makes its achievement more likely.

Be innovative. Strategic plans that only project the work the organization already does into the next three to five years fail to capitalize on the opportunity the process presents. Ideally, the strategic planning process should at least assess choices, determine strategic changes and consider creative options for moving the organization towards its vision, such as implementing new programs or service delivery strategies, expanding agency resources, building broader anti-poverty coalitions and agendas, or strengthening organizational capacity.

Keep it simple. A good strategic plan is accessible, succinct and straightforward. The plan needs to be easily communicated and usable. It should be a living document, not a lengthy, jargon-filled plan that gathers dust on the shelf. There is obviously no one right answer about length, though for most plans, 10-15 pages should be enough to convey the key elements of the organization's strategy.

Defining Community Action Strategic Planning

How does strategic planning in Community Action differ from regular nonprofit strategic planning? There are many aspects of Community Action that set CAAs apart from the rest of the nonprofit world. Take, for example, the work of CAAs, which typically includes populations that range from early childhood to the elderly, the delivery of literally dozens of different programs and services, and service areas that can cover multiple counties and municipalities. As the hub of anti-poverty efforts in their communities, CAAs are complex systems of programs and services whereas most nonprofits have a single focus. And with complexity comes the need for accountability.

Unlike most nonprofits, CAAs must have a long-range strategy that fits all its moving parts into one coherent plan focused on the single mission of Community Action – to fight poverty. This is why strategic planning is mandated in the CSBG Reauthorization Act of 1998, through Organizational Standards and as part of the Community Action network's performance management system, ROMA (Results Oriented Management and Accountability).

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Mandates

Strategic planning has been a mandate of the Community Action approach since the program's earliest days. Office of Economic Opportunity Instruction 6320-1 (1970):

“CAA(s) must develop both a long-range strategy and specific, short-range plans for using potential resources...In developing its strategy and plans, the CAA shall take into account the areas of greatest community need, the availability of resources, and its own strengths and limitations.”

Now governed by the CSBG Reauthorization Act of 1998 (CSBG Act), the idea of mandating certain planning processes is still at the foundation of Community Action. A common question agencies have about strategic planning is how it relates to the other primary planning and assessment processes that are mandated and guide the work of CAAs – the Community Needs Assessment and the Community Action Plan (CAP). As illustrated in Figure 2, the strategic plan fits in the middle of both processes. A strategic plan should always begin with a review of the data and conclusions drawn from the assessment of community needs and resources since it represents the agency's overall strategy for how to meet those needs by best utilizing available resources. In turn, the strategic plan should inform the CAP's description of how the agency will deliver programs and services.

FIGURE 2. PLANNING IN COMMUNITY ACTION



Another important CSBG mandate that impacts strategic planning is the role of the agency’s tripartite board in the process. 42 USC § 9910 Section 676B of the CSBG Act requires that, as a condition of designation, private nonprofit entities and public organizations administer their CSBG program through tripartite boards that “fully participate in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program to serve low-income communities.” Supporting the role and responsibility of the tripartite boards in planning, the Office of Community Services (OCS) Information Memorandum (IM) 82 states that “Tripartite boards are important participants in agency annual and longer-range planning activities. Specifically, individual members of the board, and the board as a whole, ought to contribute to, and benefit from, various aspects of program planning.” As such, participation of boards is essential in strategic planning discussions of how the agency should accomplish its mission through its programs and activities and how the agency will determine what constitutes success.

CSBG Organizational Standards

In January 2015, OCS released IM 138, State Establishment of Organizational Standards for CSBG Eligible Entities, under 678B of the CSBG Act, 42.U.S.C § 9914. This established 58 organizational standards for private nonprofit CAAs and 50 for public CAAs that are organized into nine categories. Category Six of the Organizational Standards addresses requirements for strategic planning.

- Standard 6.1** The organization has an agency-wide strategic plan in place that has been approved by the governing board within the past 5 years.
- Standard 6.2** The approved strategic plan addresses reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and/or empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient.
- Standard 6.3** The approved strategic plan contains family, agency, and/or community goals.
- Standard 6.4** Customer satisfaction data and customer input, collected as part of the community assessment, is included in the strategic planning process.
- Standard 6.5** The governing board has received an update(s) on progress meeting the goals of the strategic plan within the past 12 months.

There are several standards from the other Organizational Standards categories related to strategic planning that agencies should consider working towards while conducting the strategic planning process.

- Standard 1.1** The organization demonstrates low-income individuals' participation in its activities.
- Standard 1.2** The organization analyzes information collected directly from low-income individuals as part of the community assessment.
- Standard 1.3** The organization has a systematic approach for collecting, analyzing, and reporting customer satisfaction data to the governing board.
- Standard 4.1** The governing board has reviewed the organization's mission statement within the past 5 years and assured that: (1) the mission addresses poverty; and (2) The organization's programs and services are in alignment with the mission.
- Standard 4.3** The organization's Community Action plan and strategic plan document the continuous use of the full Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) cycle or comparable system (assessment, planning, implementation, achievement of results, and evaluation). In addition, the organization documents having used the services of a ROMA-certified trainer (or equivalent) to assist in implementation.
- Standard 9.3** The organization has presented to the governing board for review or action, at least within the past 12 months, an analysis of the agency's outcomes and any operational or strategic program adjustments and improvements identified as necessary.

So how does the CSBG Organizational Standards impact the strategic planning process? Aside from those standards that are good management practices (6.1 & 6.5), the most notable impacts affecting how an agency does strategic planning are that: (1) agency strategic plans must demonstrate how they are aligned with the goals and purposes of the CSBG Act, (2) in creating strategic plan goals, an agency must directly connect them to CSBG Act and (3) new elements will need to be incorporated into the strategic plan itself in order to document compliance.

Specific suggestions for how agencies can address these impacts and comply with the standards listed above are highlighted throughout the guide within the different stages of the strategic planning process. For greater detail on compliance, check out the Community Action Partnership's Technical Assistance Guides, created for each of the nine categories, available for download at on the Partnership's website at www.communityactionpartnership.com.

Results Oriented Management and Accountability

In addition to CSBG mandates and Organizational Standards, agencies should also consider the connections between strategic planning and the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) framework. As a result of Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) passed by Congress in 1993, the Office of Community Services formed the Monitoring and Assessment Task Force (MATF). In 1994, the MATF produced a National Strategic Plan endorsing a *results-oriented* approach for CAAs, including six national goals representing outcomes they found being reported across all CAAs.

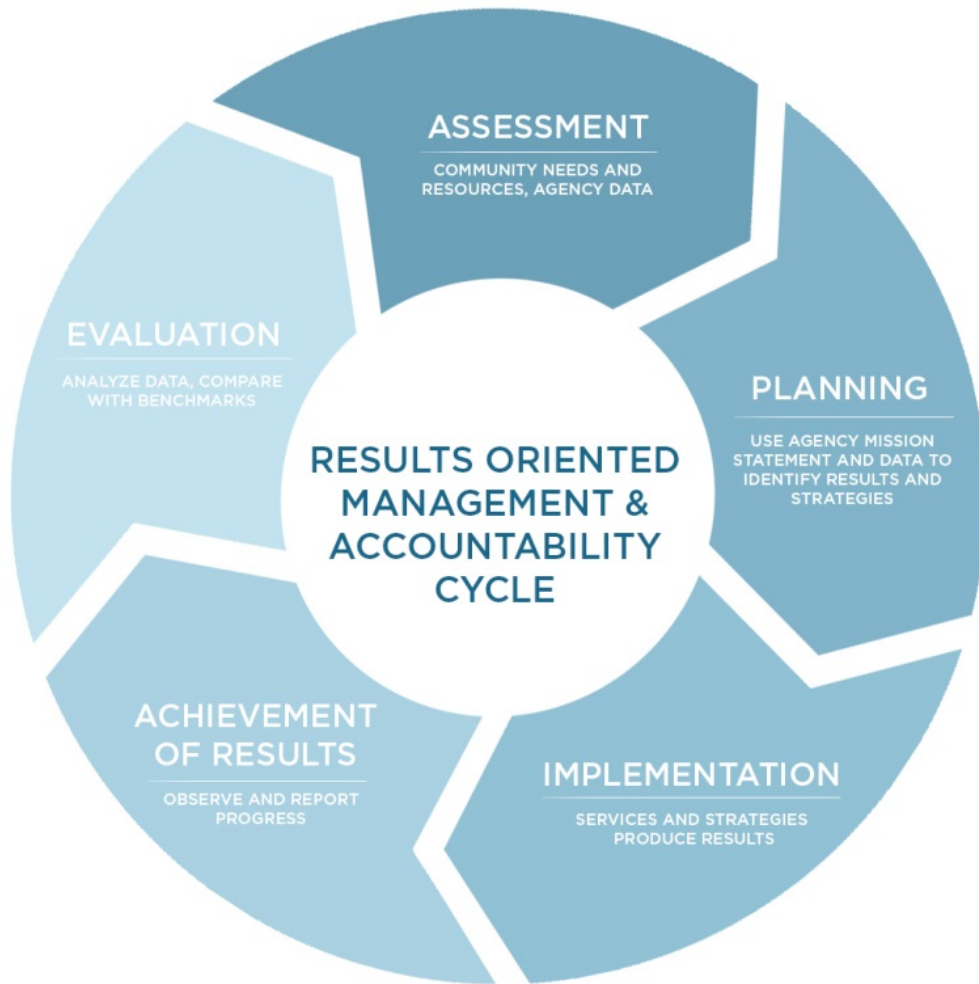
- GOAL 1:** Low-income people become more self-sufficient. (Family)
- GOAL 2:** The conditions in which low-income people live are improved. (Community)
- GOAL 3:** Low-income people own a stake in their community. (Community)
- GOAL 4:** Partnerships among supporters and providers of service to low-income people are achieved. (Agency)
- GOAL 5:** Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results. (Agency)
- GOAL 6:** Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems. (Family)

In 1998, the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act was amended, mandating implementation of a comprehensive performance-based management system across the entire Community Action Network. The Results-Oriented Management and Accountability system, commonly referred to as ROMA, was created and defined by the CSBG Act as “a sound management practice that incorporates the use of outcomes or results into the administration, management, and operation of community action agencies.”

In relation to ROMA, strategic planning is a key component and embodiment of Results-Oriented Management and Accountability. As a component of ROMA, strategic planning constitutes the second phase of the ROMA cycle (Figure 3). However, the strategic planning process itself moves through all five ROMA phases hence embodying the entire cycle.

Additionally, with the advent of the CSBG Organizational Standards, all strategic plans should be guided by the six national goals articulated by ROMA, either as a formal structure around which the goals of the strategic plan are built or as implicit objectives that inform the goals of the plan. The connection between strategic planning and ROMA is emphasized by Standard 6.2 that reflects the anti-poverty focus of the six goals and Standard 6.3 that requires strategic plans to include family, agency and/or community goals. This connection is given further emphasis through Standard 4.3 which requires CAAs document the use of the ROMA cycle in their strategic plans and the use of a ROMA certified trainer in its implementation.

FIGURE 3. ROMA CYCLE



As a living document, a strategic plan requires a strong commitment by agencies to act on the plan’s goals, monitor the implementation of its various activities and evaluate its impact to make course corrections as necessary. This is indeed the essence of performance management (i.e. ROMA) that can assist agencies with the single greatest challenge of strategic planning: ensuring structures and processes are in place to hold the agency accountable for implementing plan goals and evaluating their impact over time.

STAGE ONE: PREPARATION

Simply put, the purpose of stage one of the strategic planning process is to “plan to plan or plan to fail.” The importance of this stage cannot be emphasized enough, as all the decisions made in this stage will impact the entire process. Ample time and careful consideration should be given to all the activities within this stage. Preparing to conduct a strategic planning process involves several tasks which are grouped here into two categories: defining the parameters of the strategic planning process, and establishing a planning committee to manage the process. The outcomes of this stage are a strong planning committee, knowledgeable of the responsibility they have been given, as well as, a work plan with a detailed timeline of how the rest of the strategic planning process will be carried out.

Defining Process Parameters

Defining the process requires an agency’s leadership and board to specify critical aspects of the strategic planning process so that everyone shares the same understanding of how the process will proceed. This includes: assessing the agency’s readiness to engage in strategic planning; determining timing; agreeing upon the purpose and scope of the plan; and understanding everyone’s role in the process.

Readiness

Readiness refers to the different pieces that must be in place for an agency to conduct a successful strategic planning process. The decision to develop of a strategic plan begins with the executive director and other key members of the agency’s leadership team consulting with the board to discuss the rationale for and timing of the process. Key questions about readiness the agency should discuss include:

What is the reason for planning and what do we hope to achieve? Because a strategic plan is required by a funder or mandated by law should not be the reason an agency begins the process. Without direction and purpose, a strategic planning process can quickly derail or stall indefinitely. Agency leadership should review the reasons why the CAA should develop a new strategic plan and clearly articulate the results they hope to achieve.

Does the agency face any strategic issues? Such issues might include a change in leadership, a decision to pursue significant new sources of funding, or a choice about the development of new programs. Because such issues create both pros and cons to starting the strategic planning process, an agency should carefully assess the situation before moving forward.

Making sure all the right conditions exist for a successful strategic planning process is critical. Assess an agency’s readiness to undergo a strategic planning process, take the Strategic Planning Readiness Assessment (Appendix A1). If the answer is *no* to three or more of the conditions listed, the agency may want to address the conditions not met before proceeding further.

Timing the Process

The second parameter of the strategic planning process to define is timing. Larger agencies may schedule a strategic planning process six to twelve months in advance to ensure they have adequate time to prepare. For smaller agencies, planning four to six months in advance should give the process the time it requires. No matter how long an agency feels it needs to complete the process, the following factors related to timing should be considered:

Community Needs Assessment. Since the results of the Community Needs Assessment (CNA) are a starting point for every agency's strategic plan assessment, agencies should consider starting the strategic planning process within a year of completing the CNA, if not sooner. Additionally, to efficiently use stakeholder time and input, agencies can piggyback questions about their strategic direction onto the qualitative research conducted for the CNA.

Financial Schedules. Strategic planning typically includes an assessment of the agency's long term financial situation. To have accurate fiscal information, it is helpful to time the process earlier in the fiscal year. Also, holding the process too close to the end of the fiscal year could cause a timing conflict for finance staff focused on finalizing the following year's budget or closing out grants and other reporting requirements.

Board and Leadership Transitions. Because the board plays a significant role in the strategic planning process, agencies should be cautious about scheduling such efforts during times of significant board turnover or other important leadership transitions. Agencies rely on their boards to provide strategic guidance, help with access to resources, and assist with other important tasks during the planning process. For this reason, the process should occur when the board is stable and has significant collective experience working with the agency.

State Monitoring Schedule. To maintain compliance with the Organizational Standards, agencies need to consider the monitoring schedule of the State CSBG Lead Agency when determining the timing of a strategic planning process. If the State monitors the Standards annually, agencies should schedule their strategic planning process in advance of the 5-year time limit set for strategic plans by Organizational Standard 6.1.

Activities and Events. Agencies should review their calendars for any significant events, such as conferences and major community events that may compromise the amount of time stakeholders can commit to the planning process. Local and national electoral processes should also be considered.

The Plan's Scope

A third issue agency leadership should define is scope of the strategic plan, including both the length of time the plan will cover and what the plan will address. Most strategic plans cover a period between three to five years. Agencies should consider aligning their strategic plans to the planning cycle required by their State Lead Agency for conducting the Community Needs Assessment. Five years is the maximum time period the Organizational Standards allow between

strategic plans. Planning over multiple years allows the agency to prioritize objectives connected to long-term goals, anticipate any costs associated with such efforts and better organize activities, such as a significant public awareness campaign, that might unfold over several years.

For public agencies, defining the plan's scope raises other questions to consider. Many public agencies are conflicted about strategic planning because they typically lie within a larger agency or department that has its own strategic plan. If the department strategic plan meets all the requirements set forth by the Organizational Standards for strategic planning, then the agency can use that plan. If the department plan does not meet all the Standards, the public agency should create a strategic plan that focuses on all programs and services funded by CSBG dollars. This may require collaboration with other departments in cases where CSBG dollars are combined with other funding streams or used to leverage resources not under the direct control of the CAA.

The planning committee and agency leadership should also discuss how broad the plan will be in terms of the type and number of goals it includes. Some strategic plans include dozens of goals that cover virtually all the programs, services and functional units of the agency. Others focus on a small number of goals involving significant efforts that cut across the agency and include key partners.

Ideally, each agency program, service and functional unit should have its own operational plan, work plan or similar document developed as part of the annual planning cycle that guides its day-to-day activities. This allows the strategic plan to focus on truly *strategic* issues – those requiring collaboration across multiple programs or functional units, affect the agency as a whole, or involve a long-term investment of time and resources. This might include implementing a bundled service delivery strategy, adding services to meet the needs of a new population of customers, or conducting a major development campaign.

Understanding Roles

As the agency moves forward with the strategic planning process, it is important to define the roles the board, executive director and staff will play. Strategic planning demands a high level of collaboration that, in turn, requires a clear agreement among participants on who is responsible for what during the process, ensuring that it flows smoothly.

For the board, that means providing strategic guidance on the agency's long-term goals and external oversight of the strategic plan's implementation. In addition to these roles, the board should also be engaged throughout the process, assisting with such activities as serving on the planning committee, engaging key agency partners and community stakeholders in the process, and developing resources to support the effort through fundraising and solicitation of in-kind support through their professional networks.

The executive director's two primary roles are to serve as the project manager of the process and provide internal oversight to ensure the strategic plan's implementation. Although an executive

director's involvement in the process can vary depending on the size of the agency and complexity of the process, they are the ones responsible for providing the leadership and resources necessary to keep the process on track. In larger agencies, where a member of the leadership team may play the role of day-to-day project manager, the executive director would still work closely with that person to ensure progress of the strategic planning process. The executive director is also responsible for providing internal oversight on the development and implementation of the plan. This oversight entails making sure there is a clear structure and process in place for reporting progress towards plan goals, taking action as necessary to keep the strategic plan on track, and keeping the board informed of the plan's status.

The primary role of staff is to manage the day-to-day work of planning, writing and implementing the strategic plan. This includes participating on the planning committee, conducting research, drafting the strategic plan and implementing plan goals. Because staff is responsible for doing the heavy lifting necessary to translate the plan into action, it is especially important for agency leadership to include them in all stages of the plan's development to ensure their buy-in and support.

Ideally, an agency's leadership team and board should come to a consensus about how to handle all issues related to readiness, timing, scope and roles before proceeding with the strategic planning process. This allows full consideration of any issues that may derail the effort and strengthens accountability for and commitment to the process.

Establishing a Planning Committee

Once the strategic planning process has been defined by leadership and the board, the next step is to organize a planning committee. This is the body that will manage most of the work involved with the process. The primary responsibilities of the planning committee are to:

- Design a work plan to manage the process
- Determine the resources necessary to conduct the strategic planning process
- Solicit internal and external stakeholder participation
- Design the different stages of the strategic planning process
- Coordinate logistics for the meetings and other activities that makeup of the process
- Manage communication with internal and external stakeholders

Planning Committee Size and Composition

A planning committee's size will vary, depending on the size of the agency. A common way to establish a planning committee is to make it about of the agency's governance structure. Having a permanent board committee during the development of a strategic plan that is the same body that evaluates the implementation and outcomes of the strategic plan helps create a clear process and structure to monitor results and improves accountability. Smaller agencies might consider engaging representatives from key partners to serve on the committee, both to bolster capacity

and potentially cultivate support for the plan’s implementation. Public agencies might include staff from other parts of the agency for similar reasons.

TIP: Public CAAs that primarily sub-contract with other service providers should consider including representatives from these organizations in a formal role, since they play such a significant part in achieving the mission and outcomes of the agency, and should think of the strategic planning process as a framework that can help create a shared vision of how to integrate work across the different service providers they fund.

Planning committee members might include: the executive director or a senior member of the leadership team to serve as chair; a board member to serve as liaison to the governing body during the planning process; senior managers; staff with planning and research backgrounds; administrative staff to provide logistical support to the committee; and other key stakeholders such as a representative from front line staff, customers with significant knowledge of the agency (e.g. a member of a policy council or quality improvement committee) and representatives from key partners.

Outside of a few core staff, planning committee meeting attendance should remain flexible so that representatives from different internal and external stakeholders can participate as necessary to allow for broader participation. Another option is to use task groups that work on different parts of the planning process and report back to the committee, as illustrated in Figure 4. This option helps distribute the work load and allows for greater involvement.

FIGURE 4. TASK GROUP STRUCTURE



Orienting the Committee to the Process

Once selected, the planning committee should review this guide in full to familiarize themselves with the stages of the strategic planning process. It is helpful for the committee to begin with a discussion of the topics already covered here in this first section to ensure that everyone shares a common understanding of the process. Important topics to discuss include:

- Agency’s purpose and goals for conducting a strategic planning process
- CSBG mandates and any related state requirements
- Organizational Standards

- ROMA framework and goals
- Roles and responsibilities of all those involved
- Benefits of developing a strategic plan
- What success looks like for the strategic planning process

Developing a Work Plan and Timeline

The first task of the new planning committee is to develop a work plan and timeline that covers the entire strategic planning process from the Assessment stage (Stage Two) through the Evaluation stage (Stage Six). The committee should review the guide’s suggestions for how to design these stages and adapt them based on the agency’s needs and resources. Options for how to design and/or approach each stage can be found within each stage in call out boxes entitled *Other Design Options*. For every activity or component of the process, the work plan should clearly identify who is responsible, the timeline for completion, outcomes or deliverables and resources required. Figure 5 demonstrates what a sample work plan that includes all the stages described in the Guide would look like. See Appendix A2 for a work plan template.

FIGURE 5: STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS WORK PLAN.

| | ACTIVITY | SPECIFIC ACTIVITES | PERSONS INVOLVED | TIME |
|----|-----------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1 | PLANNING TO PLAN | Defining purpose, those involved, timeline, work plan & deliverables | Leadership team Staff Board members | 2 Weeks 1-2 meetings, 1-3 hrs. long Approval of work plan at regularly scheduled board meeting |
| 2 | ASSESSMENT | Identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges | Workgroup Staff Leadership team Board members | 1 Week Half-day retreat |
| 3 | AGENCY REVIEW | Defining mandates, vision, mission and values | Workgroup Boardmembers | 1 Week 1 meeting, 2-4 hrs. long |
| 4 | DETERMINE PRIORITIES | Creating a master list of strategic issues | Workgroup Boardmembers | 1 Week 1 meeting, 2-4 hrs. long |
| 5 | ESTABLISH GOALS, ETC | Creating goals, objectives, outcomes, planning calendar | Workgroup Boardmembers | 1 Week Full-day retreat |
| 6 | WRITE THE PLAN | Writing the strategic plan | Workgroup Leadership team | 2 Weeks 10-15 hrs |
| 7 | ADOPTION OF PLAN | Approval & dissemination | Board members Workgroup Staff | 4 Weeks Approval of plan at regularly scheduled board meeting |
| 8 | CREATE IMPLEMENTATION PLANS | Create action plans and developing monitoring and reporting plans | Workgroup Staff | 2 Weeks 1-2 meetings, each 1-3 hrs long |
| 9 | REPORT | Report on implementation progress and outcomes | Workgroup Leadership team | Quarterly 1 meeting, 1-2 hrs long |
| 10 | EVALUATE STRATEGIC PLAN | Evaluate goals & outcomes, revise and/or update plan | Workgroup leadership team and board members | Semi-Annually 1 meeting, 2-4 hrs long |

TIP: Although the size and complexity of a strategic plan is unknown at this point, it is a good idea for the work plan to sketch out timeframes for deliverables in the implementation and evaluation stages. Maintaining momentum and continuity between completion of the strategic plan and its implementation is vital to the success of the strategic planning process and is why it is suggested here that it is included in the work plan at this early stage.

Agencies may also want to consider including a budget in the work plan. The planning committee should work with the executive director and board to review the anticipated resources needs, determine what resources are available and adjust the work plan accordingly before moving on to the next stage of the process.

Using a Facilitator or Consultant

One important decision the planning committee should make at the beginning of a strategic planning process is whether to use a facilitator or consultant to help manage the process. There are both pros and cons to bring a facilitator/consultant into the process that the committee should consider before making a decision. Reasons to have a seasoned professional to provide expert guidance include that it allows agency staff to focus on the content side of the process, reduces some of the process design work load, and provides an impartial mediator to help work through contentious issues. If an agency does decide to use a facilitator/consultant, it is a good idea to involve them as early as possible in the process, both to draw on their experience with designing strategic planning processes and ensuring they have time to familiarize themselves with the agency and unique characteristics and needs.

Unfortunately, facilitators and consultants can significantly add to the cost of the process. If they are not familiar with Community Action, they may also simply provide a cookie-cutter nonprofit approach that may not meet the needs of the agency. Although a facilitator or consultant may be helpful, strategic planning does not require an outside consultant to be successful.

TIP: Because agencies participate in different types of planning processes on a regular basis, they should consider investing in the professional development of staff. Providing staff with opportunities to become certified ROMA trainers or take classes or trainings in facilitation skills are ways agencies can build their capacity to manage strategic planning and related processes.

STAGE TWO: ASSESSMENT

The second stage of the strategic planning process focuses on assessing the agency and its broader operating environment to identify strategic choices that face the agency. Identifying strategic issues is the primary reason for the assessment and will serve as the basis for developing the strategic plan. This discovery process is made up of three parts: compiling a library of core resources, conducting an analysis of the agency's strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) and performing a review of the agency in terms of the mission, organizational values and future vision, and assessing the alignment and performance of programs, services and finances. The time required for this stage of the process usually varies by the size of the agency and the amount of data it needs to collect.

Compiling Core Data Resources

The planning committee, or its data collection task group, should begin by compiling a library of existing data resources. These are core reports and documents the committee will use throughout the process and comprise the foundational information they should share. Suggested items for the library include:

- Existing strategic plan
- Community assessments (Community Action, Head Start)
- Agency-wide budget with projections for the next three years
- Financial reports and audits
- Reports of outputs and outcomes from all agency programs and services
- Results from an agency-wide scorecard or dashboard (if used)
- Customer satisfaction data
- Studies about the broader operating environment (e.g. transportation study)

This information should be collected and saved in an easily accessible location to be used by the planning committee throughout process. It is important to note that Organizational Standard 6.4 requires that the strategic plan include assessment of customer satisfaction data and input, so ensuring this is included in the library and provided to participants as part of the activities described below will help ensure compliance with the Standard.

Conducting a (SWOT) Analysis

A Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis is an organizational assessment tool used to analyze the strengths and weaknesses, which typically focuses on factors internal to the agency, and opportunities and threats, which examines factors in the agency's external operating environment. The purpose is to look for connections and trends from the input provided to identify broader strategic themes that help form the basis for developing the strategic plan. A SWOT analysis is an efficient way to quickly build up a comprehensive picture of where an agency stands in relation to its internal and external environments.

Internal Factors

The discussion of the agency's strengths and weaknesses should be as broad as possible.

Potential areas to focus on include:

- Programs and services, including outcomes and service delivery strategies
- Customer satisfaction and input
- Partnerships with key stakeholders and sectors
- Outreach, awareness, and advocacy efforts
- Human resources, including systems and staff
- Capital resources and facilities
- Funding and budget, including the budget process and overall resources of the agency
- Data collection and information technology

External Factors

The discussion of the opportunities and threats in the agency's external operating environment tends to focus on a more specific set of issues. Sometimes referred to by the acronym PESTLE, these typically include factors that are:

- Political, such as pending legislation, trends in funding or the overall political climate
- Economic, such as employment trends and the structure of the local or regional economy;
- Social, such as changing demographics or community conditions or cultural or social trends
- Technological, such as the use of new data collection systems and effect of technology on the labor market;
- Legal, such as court rulings and impact of privacy laws; and
- Environmental, such as local ecology and the built environment (e.g. transportation and housing issues).

Structuring the SWOT Analysis

One advantage of the SWOT analysis is the flexibility it affords an agency in determining the level of stakeholder engagement they are comfortable with. The planning committee should consider all the different options, especially since the gathering of information, both objective and subjective, provides an opportunity to engage a broad range and large number of stakeholders. One way to begin considering engaging more people is for the committee to develop a list of the internal and external stakeholders who might participate in the SWOT analysis. While it may not be possible to collect data and input from everyone on the list, it helps to ensure the committee thinks as broadly as possible about which stakeholders to include. Such a list might include:

Internal Stakeholders

Tripartite/advisory board
Leadership team
Program managers
Human resources
Finance and accounting
Facilities management
IT staff
Quality improvement committee
Front line staff

External Stakeholders

Customers
Advisory groups (e.g. Policy Council)
Key partners
Funders
CSBG Lead Agency
Public agencies
Other service providers
Elected officials
Faith community
Private sector

Putting together this list should help the committee narrow down who they want to participant in the SWOT analysis. After determining who, the committee needs to decide how they want the different stakeholder groups to participate. There are several ways to engage stakeholders in SWOT analysis. Some common methods include:

| <u>Method</u> | <u>Level Of Information</u> |
|-----------------------|--|
| Surveys | General input from large numbers of people |
| One-on-one Interviews | In-depth information from key stakeholders |
| Focus Groups | More targeted information from a representative sample of stakeholders |
| Community Forums | General input from a broad cross-section of stakeholders |

The planning committee should determine the data collection method best suited for each stakeholder group by deciding what level of detail they would like from each group and how much time and resources it would take to collect the input. After careful consideration of the extent of input the planning committee seeks for its SWOT analysis, a data collection plan should be created to carry out the SWOT using the data methods selected.

While conducting more active participation methods such as focus groups or community forums requires a bit more effort and planning, a big part of planning stakeholder surveys and interviews is determining what questions to ask. Example survey questions include:

- What has been your primary experience with our organization in terms of our programs and services and interaction with our staff?
- What do you think are the organization's primary strengths?
- What do you think are the organization's primary weaknesses or areas for improvement?
- What do you think are the greatest challenges facing our organization?
- Are there any programs or services which you think that we should focus more resources on? Fewer resources? Offer instead of or in addition to?

- Do you have any other feedback that you want us to consider in our strategic planning work?

Conducting a Group SWOT Analysis

For more active participation methods such as focus groups or community forums, different ways to structure the analysis include:

- Open space processes that involve large groups of stakeholders who provide feedback to facilitators at different stations that cover the four quadrants
- Stakeholder-based processes that use multiple meetings to gather feedback from different internal and external stakeholder group to look for similarities and differences in perspectives
- Multi-stage processes that use either small or large group meetings to gather feedback on each of the four quadrants in turn to encourage more in-depth focus on the issues;

Since the amount of information generated by the initial analysis can be significant, it is a good idea to focus the results of the SWOT. One way is to use a weighted voting system to prioritize the list of issues in each quadrant. This can be done by dividing the number of issues in each quadrant by three and then giving each participant that number of votes to distribute across the options (i.e. if there are 18 issues in a quadrant, participants would get six votes to identify the most important issues). Another option is to ask participants to identify common themes that emerge within each quadrant. No matter what technique is used, it is important to remember that the ultimate purpose of the SWOT analysis is to build towards the identification of the strategic issues that will serve as the basis for developing the strategic plan.

FIGURE 6. SWOT ANALYSIS

| | | |
|---------|------------|---------------|
| | INTERNAL | EXTERNAL |
| HELPFUL | STRENGTHS | OPPORTUNITIES |
| HARMFUL | WEAKNESSES | THREATS |

Another recommended way to focus the results of a SWOT analysis is to ask participants how the agency can capitalize on its strengths and opportunities and respond to its weaknesses and threats. One option is to work across quadrants, as shown in Figure 6, by asking participants how opportunities can be used to address weaknesses or how strengths can address threats. Focusing on how the agency can respond to the issues helps shift thinking from analysis to action and sets the stage for developing the strategic plan. For a blank SWOT Analysis for agency use, see Appendix A3.

Ideas for Improving Outcomes of a Group SWOT Analysis

Clarify what participants should discuss in each quadrant. Just asking participants to discuss the agency’s strengths or the threats it faces is too open ended. Provide an internal structure for each quadrant by listing the specific issues the participants should discuss or providing them with a visual, such as a strategy map (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7. STRATEGY MAP



Build shared knowledge among the participants. Because a SWOT analysis covers so much ground, most participants will be unfamiliar with issues in at least some of the quadrants. Some

ways to address this challenge is to build shared knowledge among the participants by providing them with resources from the library of core data resources the planning committee has created, having staff brief the participants on key issues at the start of the exercise, or inviting experts to discuss key issues.

Consider using a facilitator. SWOT analysis is a complex activity for a group to self-manage. Even if the agency lacks the resources or chooses not to hire a facilitator, an internal facilitator delegated to read up on and manage the exercise can make the difference between success and failure.

Performing an Agency Review

An agency review re-examines and clarifies the agency's mission, values and vision and assesses the alignment and performance of agency programs, services and finances. This helps the agency determine if its overall anti-poverty approach is on track and whether its programs and services are aligned with its mission. A close appraisal ensures all aspects of the agency's management and operations are taken into account when determining strategic issues that the agency faces.

Compared to the SWOT analysis, the agency review is more focused. The process most often involves a smaller group of internal stakeholders who are more familiar with an agency's programs and services, usually the board, leadership team, and senior managers. Also, including the full board in this portion of the assessment will help an agency meet Organizational Standard 4.1 that requires the governing board to review the mission every five years and assure it addresses poverty and that programs and services are aligned with the mission. The planning committee should also consider including a certified ROMA trainer in the agenda to help review the mission statement and assist with interpreting the agency's performance. The committee should schedule enough time for an extended conversation to occur, such as a day-long retreat or, alternatively, as several half-day meetings.

Clarifying Mission, Values and Vision

The first step in the review usually begins with a discussion of an agency's mission, vision, and values. The questions below are intended as examples that can be adapted to meet an agency's needs and strategic planning process. The planning committee may want to distribute the questions before the meeting or retreat to encourage participants to reflect on them and bring their best thinking to the discussion. See Appendix A4 for a handout of the questions. Also, the planning committee may want to provide a results summary of the most recent Community Needs Assessment to participants. This will help the group assess whether mission directly addresses the causes and conditions of poverty in an agency's service area.

Mission

- Does it identify the population we are committed to serving no matter what?
- Is this population our primary customers?
- Does it specify our core programs or primary services and interventions?

- Are these programs and services that we are known for?
- What are the primary needs of the communities we serve?
- Is it clear what the desired results, outcomes or impacts of our efforts are?
- Does it state the goals we want to achieve for the individual and/or families we serve?
- Does it identify the relationships that help us further our mission?

Values

- What do we believe in as an agency?
- What core values guide our work?
- Do they tell people how we are different from other organizations?
- How do we believe we should treat others?
- How do we want to be treated ourselves?
- What do we value our clients?
- What are our attitudes and values about our performance?

Vision

- How do we want to be as an agency in the future?
- What is the ideal future for our community and/or agency?
- Does it describe how our community and/or agency would look if we accomplished our mission?
- What will success look like for us?
- Does it present an inspiring view of the future?
- Is it brief and easy to communicate?
- Is it shared by members of the community?

After fully discussing the mission, values, and vision and determining if any changes are necessary, the second half of the agency review focuses on alignment and performance of agency programs, services and finances. The discussion should center on three issues. First, are the agency's programs and services aligned with mission? Second, what is the projected financial situation of the agency over the next three years? Third, where does the agency financial and programmatic performance stand?

Aligning Programs and Services with the Agency's Mission

As part of complying with Organizational Standard 4.1, discussion should be documented. An easy way of fulfilling this standard would be to have the discussion during a board meeting or retreat. The purpose of ensuring programs and services align with an agency's mission is to limit the possibility of mission drift, wherein an agency departs from its mission by taking on additional programs and/or services that are related to but do not directly reinforce the mission.

Questions to ask about the alignment of agency programs and services to its mission include:

- Do all our programs and services reflect the purpose and values of the agency?
- Has any new funding caused us to stretch our services, resulting in us drifting from our mission?
- Are we providing any programs and services that are beyond our capacity to provide?
- What programs and services have been added in the last five years? Do they represent our core business?
- Have we started serving any new populations within the last five years? Are they our primary customers?
- Are organizational efforts spread too thin? If so where?
- Where are we providing services but not meeting community needs?
- On a scale of completely disconnected to highly integrated, where are our programs and services? Where can we align or bundle?
- Is there a clear connection between all our programs and services and our mission?

Financial and Programmatic Performance

The final step in reviewing the agency, and in the ROMA cycle, is evaluation. Although, programmatic performance has already been reviewed as part of the assessment, this section will cover the fiscal side to accountability. To evaluate the agency, the committee should be provided with a budget narrative or agency dashboard that includes a brief description of the purpose, population served, outputs and outcomes, and cost or budget for each program or service. The planning committee should also request that the finance department or similar unit prepare a long range budget that includes projected funding for the next three years (this type of budget is often prepared for board retreats or similar planning meetings and should most likely only require updating). Before analyzing the relationship between finances and programs and services, questions to ask about an agency's budget and long range financial projections include:

- Is the agency currently fiscally sound?
- Does the agency have a diverse revenue stream from public, private, and philanthropic sources?
- Are there any future threats to significant sources of support the agency should address (e.g. possible re-competition for Head Start funding, highly competitive application processes for grants ending in the next one to three years?)
- Does the agency have a strong business development plan?

After evaluating the agency's financial situation, the planning committee should look at the relationship between finances and programs and services. Two ways to analyze this is through a portfolio analysis or a cost-benefit analysis. It is important to note that not all programs and services lend themselves to these types of analyses, especially safety net programs, because

private and public agencies must at times deliver a necessary service for the common good regardless of the cost per outcome.

Portfolio Analysis

To analyze connection between the cost of programs and services and their impact on the agency's mission, programs and services are placed in grid (Figure 8) organized by their total cost and impact on the mission.

- QUADRANT 1:** Strong projects or activities with real potential for growth: dynamic, popular and creative.
- QUADRANT 2:** New or innovative projects but not yet proven. They might become strong and move into Square 1. Alternatively, they may fail and move into Square 4; they need to be monitored closely.
- QUADRANT 3:** Reliable, safe projects or activities that provide the agency with a degree of financial security and/or credibility; they provide a solid base.
- QUADRANT 4:** Take up resources and provide little or no added value for the effort required. Often organizations have problems dealing with such activities because they may be closely bound up with the organization's earlier history or be viewed as necessary.

FIGURE 8. PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS MATRIX



This is a highly effective way to create a clear overall picture of the cost of programs and services compared to the outcomes they produce. Locations in different quadrants of the grid prompt questions the stakeholders should ask, such as:

- How well balanced is the portfolio (between, for example, creative but risky projects and stable projects)?
- How might each service or project move between boxes over the next year or so?
- How could your quadrant 2 turned into quadrant 1? Would it be worth the investment of time, effort and other resources?
- What should happen to the activities in quadrant 4 (e.g. invest in them, hand them over, float them off, or close them down)?
- What are your agency’s current plans for developing new areas of activity?

This activity can require a considerable amount of preparation and analysis, so the planning committee may want to include it as a follow-up to the initial analysis of the vision, mission, and values or as an independent activity within the assessment stage. References in Appendix B provide guides that offered detailed instructions for how to conduct a full portfolio analysis exercise

Cost-Benefit Analysis

A somewhat simpler alternative is to calculate the efficiency and effectiveness of each program and service. Efficiency is the cost per output, which could be a customer served or unit provided. Effectiveness is the cost per outcome. Any agency with a good budget knows how much its different operations cost as a whole but a surprisingly small number track per customer/unit or per outcome cost. To understand, Figure 9 provides examples of how to calculate both program efficiency and program effectiveness in terms of cost. Breaking down an agency’s budget in this manner is extremely helpful because it reveals the actual cost of what its programs and services produce in outputs and outcomes. This helps stakeholders make better strategic decisions about which programs to continue, expand, or potentially cut.

FIGURE 9. CALCULATING EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS



Concluding the Assessment Stage

The assessment stage is challenging because it can create a significant amount of information. The planning committee should consider how to organize and disseminate the information they collect and may want to develop a communication plan that spells out how the data from each activity will be compiled and communicated to both internal and external stakeholders. Periodic updates and discussion of results at staff meetings, webinars (especially for agencies that operate at multiple sites), and even a half or full day retreat at the end of the stage to discuss results are all options to consider.

Remember that the goal of the strategic planning process isn't just to create a strategic plan, but to help the agency as a whole reflect on its mission, outcomes and future direction. Sharing the information collected during the Assessment stage, as broadly as possible with staff at all levels, builds organizational capacity to contribute to the strategic planning process, helps build ownership of the plan and creates a common understanding of the agency and its mission. The planning committee should make sure that the results are synthesized into a form that is informative to other staff who didn't participate in the assessment, such as a report of the main strategic issues that emerged.

It is important for the planning committee to keep in mind that the ultimate deliverable for this stage is a list of strategic issues that face the agency. Each assessment activity should produce a summative list of these issues and opportunities that will inform the development of the strategic plan in stage three.

STAGE THREE: PLANNING

The third stage of the strategic planning process involves creating the strategic plan itself. This section reviews how to prioritize the strategic issues determined by the assessment, develop goals, objectives and performance measures, and what to include in the final plan document.

Prioritizing Strategic Issues

The planning committee should review the strategic issues developed in the Assessment stage and narrow down and prioritize those issues that will form the basis for strategic plan's goals. Prior to meeting, committee members may want to reflect upon the list of issues in order to lay a foundation for informed discussion. To start discussion, each strategic issue should be evaluated for its alignment with the agency's vision. Remember, strategic planning is all about determining where the agency is at (through the assessment) and then determining where the agency wants to be in 3-5 years (the agency's vision). Only the issues that will have the most impact on achieving the agency's vision should be considered.

The committee can begin determining the truly strategic issues by using a weighted voting system, similar to the method for focusing the results in a committee SWOT analysis. The voting done by giving each participant a certain number of votes to distribute across the list, identifying what they believe are the most impactful issues to address. If there are a lot of issues, categorizing common themes first may assist in the process. When everyone has completed voting, if there is little disagreement about the top 3-5 strategic issues and priorities, it may be possible to move immediately to developing goals. If there is no general agreement on issues and priorities, then it may be important to discuss and explore the issues further. Two ways this can be done are:

Facilitated Discussion of Top Issues. As starting point, discussion is limited to the top ten strategic issues identified through weighted voting. Any issue left out that someone feels strongly about should be allowed to petition the group for inclusion, otherwise the committee can begin going issue by issue and answering these questions:

- What is the strategic issue?
- What makes it a strategic issue?
- How does the issue relate to the organization's mandates and vision?
- How does the issue relate to the organization's strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats?
- What are the consequences of failing to address the issue?
- What makes it a priority?
- What are the benefits of addressing the strategic issue?

Discussion continues until the committee agrees on the top 3-5 issues

OTHER DESIGN OPTIONS: Structuring the Strategic Plan Development Process

While it is tempting to streamline the process by holding a one or two day retreat with just the board and leadership team, this approach risks weakening the buy-in from staff who will ultimately be responsible for implementing the plan. For this reason, the planning committee may want to consider how to involve more stakeholders to the greatest extent possible in the development process. Options to increase participation include:

Committee and task groups. This approach relies on a smaller committee to guide the process, but uses a larger number of stakeholders organized into task groups to develop the plan's goals. Task groups typically focus on different areas, such as programs, finance or community partnerships, as determined by the strategic priorities. The groups develop goals in their different areas and then convene representatives to meet with the committee to review their work and provide feedback. This process happens several times as the goals, objectives and performance measures are developed and prioritized until stakeholders agree on a final document. While this model can take time, it allows for expanded participation by a larger group of stakeholders and provides additional opportunity for reflection as the plan is developed.

Team-based negotiation. This approach starts by identifying all the internal and external stakeholder groups who will participate in developing the plan. These groups can be organized by functional unit (e.g. programs, human resources, finance) or position in the agency (e.g. front line staff, managers, key external stakeholders). Groups develop draft strategic plan goals, based on the strategic priorities, on their own and then send smaller teams to meet collectively. The strategic plan is typically developed over several meetings, with the teams returning to the stakeholder groups for additional feedback. This model also allows for a high level of participation and helps show areas of difference and consensus in how different stakeholder groups perceive the strategic issues the agency faces.

Open space large group meeting. The open space approach is a widely used process that can involve dozens, sometimes hundreds, of individuals at the same time. Typically using several facilitators, participants are allowed to self-organize around issues of interest, collectively developing strategic plan goals while moving between groups. The process typically concludes with the selection of a smaller group to synthesize the goals into a final strategic plan. Open space is a highly participatory approach, but requires the use of skilled and experienced facilitators to manage effectively.

Whatever structure the development of the plan takes, the planning committee needs to consider how they will prepare the additional stakeholders for creating the plan.

Evaluating Top Issues Based on Criteria. To begin, the committee first creates an agreed upon set of criteria in which to evaluate each issue, such as the following:

- Value – Will the strategy contribute to meeting agreed-upon goals?
- Appropriateness – Is the strategy consistent with the organization's mission, values, and operating principles?
- Feasibility – Is the strategy practical, given personnel and financial resources and capacity?
- Acceptability – Is the strategy acceptable to the Board, key staff, and other stakeholders?
- Cost-benefit – Is the strategy likely to lead to sufficient benefits to justify the costs in time and other resources?

- Timing – Can and should the organization implement this strategy at this time, given external factors and competing demands?

Once there is consensus on the criteria, the committee begins evaluating each issue and discussing the results. This process continues until it yields a list of the top 3-5 issues the committee agrees upon.

Whatever method is used, the discussion should generate a list of the top 3-5 priorities that the strategic plan’s goals will be based on. Participants should be reminded that additional priorities can always be added once the plan’s goals have been established and in the future as the plan is revisited and updated. Additionally, a list of more short term or tactical issues participants feel the agency should act on but not include in the strategic plan can be kept and taken up by the leadership team or a separate committee after the plan is completed.

Developing Goals and Objectives

Once the strategic priorities are determined, participants can start developing a list of potential goals based on the strategic priorities. Goals are the highest level of the strategic plan and describe the outcomes to be accomplished in order to achieve the agency’s vision. Just as in ROMA, agencies start by determining the results (outcomes) they wish to achieve.

Remember, goals represent the change the agency wants to create and should include that change within the goal statement through words such as reduce, increase, improved, etc. Goals should also conform to the acronym SMART:

| | |
|------------|---------------------------------------|
| Specific | Is the goal clear and to the point? |
| Measurable | Can you tell if it is accomplished? |
| Attainable | Is it a realistic goal? |
| Relevant | Is it a priority of the organization? |
| Timely | By when will the goal be achieved? |

Applying the SMART principle to goal statements helps ensure they are not too general.

Examples of strategic plan goals that clearly state the impact the agency hopes to achieve are:

- Reduce homelessness in the agency’s service area by 50% in three years
- Provide access to quality childcare for all low-income families in five years
- Increase agency revenue by 25% in three years

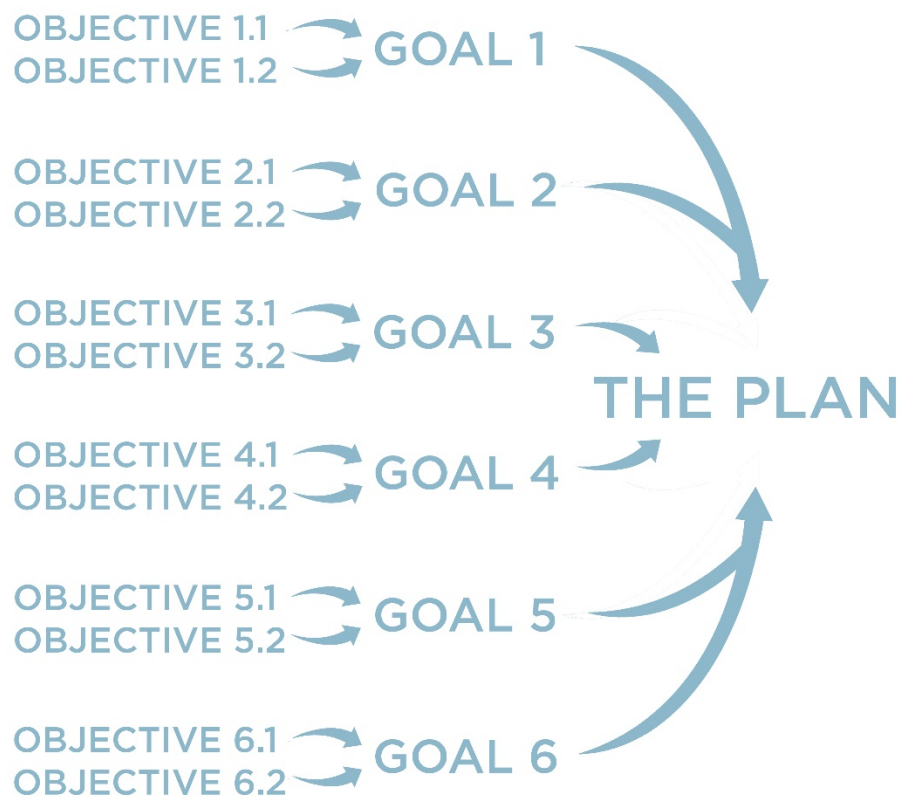
TIP: As required by Organized Standard 6.3, each goal should clearly connect to one or more National ROMA Goals, meaning they address the needs of families, the agency, and/or communities.

A good test for determining whether a goal is truly strategic is to ask whether the goal is a *means* or an *end*. Many strategic plans have goals such as “build a homeless shelter that will provide services to 50 customers.” While this may be a significant undertaking for the agency, it describes a means (building a homeless shelter) to an end (reducing homelessness). Reframing

the goal statement to “reduce homelessness in the agency’s service area by 50% in three years,” changes the focus of the goal to the ultimate impact (end) the agency wants to achieve. This forces participants to think of a wider range of potential objectives needed to achieve the goal and, in turn, creating more comprehensive and effective strategies for the strategic plan.

Depending on the size of the agency, five or fewer strategic goals will be sufficient for most agencies. Keep in mind, strategic plans are designed with a cascading framework which multiplies between each level exponentially, as illustrated in Figure 10. With an average of three objectives per goal, an agency could be looking at tracking and reporting on 9-15 objectives.

FIGURE 10. STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK



Developing Objectives

Objectives are the middle level of the strategic plan and describe the strategies (means) that help achieve strategic plan goals. Like goals, the objectives should be SMART as well. Each objective should be specific enough that one can estimate the time and resources it will take to accomplish. Also, it is helpful to organize objectives by near, medium and long-term time frames to think through how they should be sequenced over time. How do the objectives fit together – do they *add up* to a coherent strategy that will achieve the goal or are they piecemeal and ultimately unconnected efforts? With this approach, participants can see the full range of potential objectives, discuss their benefits and limitations, and ultimately select those that will

make the biggest impact towards achieving the goal. Examples of objectives that build on the previous goals are:

Goal 1: Reduce homelessness in the agency's service area by 50%

- 1.1 Increase the number of homeless customers who receive supportive services
- 1.2 Develop a rapid re-housing program to serve 125 homeless customers
- 1.3 Buy and renovate 15 apartments to provide transitional housing

Goal 2: Provide access to quality childcare for all low-income families within five years

- 2.1 Work with local employers to establish childcare reimbursement accounts
- 2.2 Add fee-for-service childcare slots to the agency's childcare center
- 2.3 Develop a childcare quality improvement program for unlicensed providers

Goal 3: Increase agency revenue by 25% in three years

- 3.1 Hold two annual fundraisers
- 3.2 Create a committee to identify existing programs that can add fee-for-service options
- 3.3 Convene key partners to identify opportunities for joint grant applications

It is perfectly acceptable – even preferable – to brainstorm more goals and objectives than will be included in the final strategic plan. The important part is considering a wide array of potential options for responding to the strategic issues and only then building consensus on how to choose among the competing priorities. One option is to develop a list of potential goals and then narrow them down through voting, or other consensus-building procedures, before considering objectives. Although this approach streamlines the process, stakeholders don't get to consider how the goals will be achieved before deciding which should be a part of the plan.

Creating Performance Measures/Indicators

First, when determining performance measures (also known as outcome indicators) for your objectives, do not reinvent wheel if you do not have to. If one of your strategic plan goals aligns with one of the six National Goals, there may already be existing National Performance Indicators (NPIs) for your objectives, especially if your goals are externally focused at the community-level or family-level. For instance, Goal 1 and 2 (above) align with the national Goal 2: The conditions in which low-income people live are improved (community level). This means objectives under those goals may have a National Performance Indicator like Objective 1.3 “Buy and renovate 15 apartments to provide transitional housing,” which can be measured by NPI 2.1 D. Safe and affordable housing units in the community preserved or improved through construction.

For objectives that don't align perfectly with an NPI, performance measures/indicators need to be created. An easy way to create indicators is by ensuring objectives are SMART. For example Objective 2.3 “Develop a childcare quality improvement program for unlicensed providers,” is not measurable. By improving the objective to, “Assist six unlicensed childcare providers to

receive their license,” the objective can now be measured by the number of unlicensed childcare providers the agency assists. An even better objective would be, “Develop 500 childcare slots by assisting unlicensed providers,” because it aligns the performance measure (# of childcare slots) with the outcome sought for Goal 2: Provide access to quality childcare for all low-income families within five years.

Another example using SMART is Objective 1.3 “Hold two annual fundraisers,” it is measurable but it is not measuring the change necessary to achieve Goal 3: Increase agency revenue by 25% in three years. A better objective would be, “Raise \$80,000 a year by holding two annual fundraisers,” because now the performance indicator is measuring the dollar amount risen which corresponds directly with measuring an increase in revenue.

If the objective can’t be made SMART, or more specifically - quantifiable (measurable), than it may be an activity or step in accomplishing what should be the objective. For example, “Create a coalition of stakeholders to develop a local homeless policy agenda,” is a good idea but the objective does not create a direct outcome for Goal 1: Reduce homelessness in the agency’s service area by 50%. If the objective stated, “Get the Board of Supervisors to implement one new homeless or housing policy that benefits the homeless within the next 5 years,” the impact of that policy is potentially measurable, with the performance measure being the number of homeless who benefitted.

TIP: Identifying outcome indicators is a formal part of ROMA training. If the agency is having difficulty defining performance measures/indicators, they should consider contacting a ROMA certified trainer in their network.

Writing the Plan

As soon as goals and objectives are finalized, the planning committee can create the strategic plan document. Strategic plans should be short, no more than 10-20 pages. The document should also be clear, succinct and communicate to a reader not involved in its development exactly what the agency intends to accomplish. The committee may consider reviewing strategic plans from other agencies to get ideas of how they want to structure the document. The actual plan document may include:

- Executive Summary that briefly describes the plan’s purpose and goals
- Introduction that describes the process used to develop the plan and stakeholders who participated
- Mandates that describes how the process addresses CSBG mandates, the Organizational Standards, and the ROMA framework
- Assessment Summary that lists the main resource documents used and discusses the main findings from the SWOT analysis; review of the vision, mission, and values; and any other research or activities
- Strategic Issues that were identified as a result of the assessment

- Goals, Objectives and Performance Indicators that comprise the actual strategic plan
- Next Steps that outline how the plan will be implemented

The planning committee should circulate the draft strategic plan for review and comment by internal stakeholders not directly involved in the process, to help increase buy-in for the final plan and identify any potentially contentious issues the leadership team and board should address. Once satisfied with the final draft, the planning committee submits the plan to the full board for formal approval. This final step of the Planning stage ensures compliance with Organizational Standard 6.5.

Once approved by the board, the planning committee should develop a dissemination plan. The main goals of the strategic plan should be discussed with the staff and the plan document should be accessible (e.g. posted on the CAA's website). The planning committee may want to include updates or meetings with key partners to discuss implications of the plan for the agency's work.

STAGE FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION & ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

Implementation is the point in the strategic planning process where most plans fail because it involves efforts that may cut across functional units of the agency or do not easily fit in already established governance structures and decision-making processes. For these reasons, the planning committee should ensure that a clear plan for implementation is developed and supported by agency leadership and board.

OTHER DESIGN OPTIONS: STRUCTURING THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Options for structuring implementation include:

Creating a formal implementation committee. This approach hands off responsibility for managing implementation to a committee that would have formal responsibility for implementing the plan's goals and objectives and would include one or two representatives from each internal stakeholder group, the leadership team, and potentially the board. Although this approach creates a clear single governance body that is responsible for plan, it also creates an additional layer of bureaucracy that may impede implementation.

Handing off responsibility to agency leadership. This approach transfers responsibility for implementation to the agency's leadership team. Using an existing governance structure already responsible for managing similar types of planning and decision-making processes, senior leadership decides who will implement the plan's goals and objectives and then oversees the work. A potential problem with this approach is that the leadership team can lose focus given their existing management responsibilities, allowing work on plan goals to be put off when they compete with the core duties of the team.

Forming task groups around plan goals. Task groups are a way to deal with action plans that require work to take place across existing organizational boundaries, for example, if a plan required finance to work closely with program staff. In this distributed governance structure, task groups are created around various plan goals and objectives would include representatives from each internal stakeholder group that plays a part in implementing that group's action plan. Although this approach is more flexible because it shares responsibility for implementation across a wider group of stakeholders that is also the reason it can be harder to coordinate overall implementation activities and maintain collective effort.

Integrating implementation into existing organizational units. This approach passes on responsibility for implementation of goals and objectives to an existing organization unit (e.g. human resources, Head Start Center) and is a good option when an action plan's implementation only requires staff that work within the same part of an agency. An advantage to this approach is it relies on existing management and decision-making structures that would treat plan implementation like any other project.

Two reasons a planning committee may want to consider using a combination of the above options are that different goals and objectives fit better with different governance structures and decision-making processes and implementation may require different approaches depending on the internal stakeholders involved and level of effort needed to carry out the action plans.

While the implementation stage lasts throughout the life of the strategic plan, the activities described in this section should be completed as soon as the plan has been approved by the board to maintain momentum and avoid the loss of focus that can occur at the end of the planning stage. Creating an implementation plan focuses on three main deliverables that make-up the second half of your strategic plan: action plans, a monitoring plan and a reporting plan.

Before developing individual action plans for each objective, the strategic planning committee needs to determine how they want to manage implementation. The easiest way to implement a plan that uses an agency's existing governance structures is to keep the strategic planning committee intact, as a committee of the board, to oversee implementation.

Since action plans should be developed by those internal stakeholders (i.e. staff) that will be responsible for implementation, the planning committee should delegate objectives to leadership team members in charge of the functional units/departments that will be primarily carrying out the objectives. For example, if the goal is fund diversification and the objective is to "Raise \$80,000 a year by holding two annual fundraisers," then the Director of Development or Operations should be the one responsible for the objective and creating the corresponding action plan. Once delegated, core duties for those responsible for plan objectives include:

- Developing the action plan with a team of staff who will carry out the objective
- Managing ongoing implementation of different action steps through regular meetings
- Tracking budget and resource needs
- Identifying and addressing challenges to implementation as they arise
- Monitoring progress and measuring outcomes
- Reporting results to the strategic planning committee

Developing Action Plans

Once all strategic plan objectives are delegated by the planning committee, the next step is to develop action plans. More complex or longer-term objectives might require multiple action plans. Creating action plans are important because they provide a roadmap for accomplishing each objective and as such, should be as detailed as possible. This includes deciding who will carry out each step and what resources will be required. Determining resources for every action provides a more accurate budget and identifies any potential shortfalls or bottlenecks that might delay implementation.

Developing action plans before work begins ensures there is a well-defined path for implementation, adequate resources and staff and clear timeline. Action plans can sometimes involve ten, twenty, or more individual steps, so those responsible should be sure to use as much detail as necessary to fully describe their plan. If the agency already has a project management tool or framework its uses to plan and manage projects, staff can adapt such existing frameworks. However, the following are suggested items to include in each action plan:

- The strategic plan goal and objective the action plan is for
- The primary person responsible for the action plan’s implementation
- Action steps that provide a specific, step-by-step roadmap that clearly describes how the objective will be accomplished
- Budget and resources required for each step
- Staff person(s) responsible for completing each step
- Timelines that state when each step will be completed

Consider the sample action plan (Figure 11) for Objective 2.2 “Create 10 fee-for-service childcare slots in an agency’s childcare facility.” The action plan provides examples of the first two steps – (1) developing a business plan and (2) marketing the service to parents – wherein detail about the resources and staff required fully maps out each action from beginning to end. For a copy of a blank action plan, see Appendix A5.

FIGURE 11: SAMPLE ACTION PLAN

| Objective 2.2: Create 10 fee-for-service childcare slots in an agency’s childcare facility | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| Performance Measure/Indicator(s): # of fee-for-service slots created | | | | | |
| Objective Team Leader: Jane Doe | | | | | |
| Action Steps | Resources/Cost | Staff Responsible | Target Date of Completion | % Complete | Status Explanation |
| Develop a business plan | 1 FTE - 10 Days | Jane D. | 05/19/16 | 100% | Completed |
| Market service to parents | 1 FTE - 10 Days \$100 - Printing | John D. | 06/20/16 | 25% | Designed marketing materials |

Once a draft action plan is developed, it should be submitted for review and approval to the strategic planning committee. Once all action plans are finalized for each strategic plan objective, staff responsible for the objective’s implementation should meet with their implementation team to make sure everyone has a solid understanding of roles and responsibilities within the team and how progress and results will be monitored and reported. Also, the team leader should create a set meeting schedule, determined as far in advance as possible.

Developing a Monitoring Plan to Track Progress

Prior to implementation, everyone should be made aware of how progress will monitor. The tracking of strategic plan objectives are already built into the action plan template (Figure 11) in the last two columns: (1) percentage completed (of the task or activity) and (2) status explanation (short bullet points notes that reflect the percentage reported). The team leader for the objective’s implementation tracks the status of each task/activity and submits the filled-out action plan quarterly, at a minimum, to the strategic planning committee to review the overall progress of the plan’s implementation.

Developing a Reporting Plan to Track Outcomes

Also prior to implementation, the planning committee should create a reporting plan so the staff responsible for the objective's implementation knows what to report and when. If the agency already has an outcome reporting tool, such as for NPIs, incorporating the performance measures created in the strategic plan may be as simple as adding them to the list.

A common tool used by CAAs to track overall results of programs, services, management and operations across the organization is an agency-wide scorecard or dashboard. This type of reporting tool identifies the outcomes the agency plans to achieve across its programs, services and functional units, determines what indicators to track to assess progress towards each outcome, and presents the data in a simple format that helps the leadership team and board see the overall success of its operations. Although full agency-wide scorecards require a significant investment of time and resources to create, they provide a powerful tool that supports a more strategic approach to the management of a CAA. If your agency already has one, staff should be able to incorporate the performance measures created in the strategic plan.

Creating a modified scorecard or dashboard of just strategic plan outcomes is another option and not difficult to create in a spreadsheet program. Using a dashboard to consolidate the reporting of outcomes (via performance measures) saves times in the long run and enables the strategic planning committee to better track progress. The performance measure data for the dashboard is collected and inputted into a spreadsheet by the staff responsible for the objective. The data from the input spreadsheet is then compiled onto another spreadsheet that summarizes the data and can be printed and provided as a report for the strategic planning committee or board. The dashboard tracks results for each completed and in process objective. The input spreadsheet (Figure 12) typically includes:

- Strategic Plan Goals – with all objectives and corresponding performance measures/indicators listed below
- Benchmark Measures/Targets - what outcomes will be compared against (note: if objectives are SMART, they already include a target)
- Frequency - how often outcomes/results will be collected (e.g. quarterly)
- Year-To-Date (YTD) Progress - the actual progress towards the target (usually an average or aggregate amount)
- Status – a color code indicating the outcomes relation to target (e.g. below target = red, on target or above target = green)

FIGURE 12. EXAMPLE DASHBOARD INPUT SPREADSHEET

| Goal 3: Increase agency revenue by 25% in three years | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----|----------|----------|----|----------|------------|-------|
| Objective 3.1: Raise \$80,000 a year by holding two annual fundraisers | | | | | | | | |
| Performance Measure | Target | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | YTD | DIFFERENCE | % YTD |
| \$ Amount Raised | \$80,000 | 0 | \$36,000 | \$19,000 | 0 | \$55,000 | - \$25,000 | 69% |
| # of fundraisers held | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 100% |
| Objective 3.1 Outcome Score | | | | | | | | 84% |

Whether the agency decides to use a strategic plan scorecard or dashboard to report on the status of achieving plan objectives, the strategic planning committee, at a minimum, should receive quarterly reports. This ensures accountability on the part of staff responsible for implementing the action plans and helps alert the strategic planning committee to issues that may require their direct attention. In turn, the strategic planning committee should report to the board on progress towards strategic plan goals and objectives on a quarterly basis, or semi-annually (at a minimum).

Integrating Reporting into Operations

Along with a creating reporting tool, the strategic planning committee should consider other options for integrating the strategic plan into the agency’s routine management and operations. The more a strategic plan remains a separate set of activities, the less likely it is to succeed. Ideas for how the strategic planning committee can accomplish this include:

Provide periodic progress reports at staff meetings. Providing quarterly or otherwise regular updates on progress towards implementing the strategic plan helps keep the work on the agency’s collective radar screen, provides internal stakeholders with opportunities to provide feedback, and helps promote accountability across all levels of the organization.

Discuss the strategic plan at staff and board retreats. Many agencies hold annual retreats for their staff and board to reflect on the agency’s mission, goals, and ongoing work. Making sure discussion on the strategic plan has a regular place on the agenda at these events reinforces its importance and offers additional avenues for input from staff and board alike.

Incorporate strategic plan objectives into job descriptions and performance reviews. One challenge of implementing strategic plan objectives is that they can feel like extra duties to staff. One way to address this issue is to incorporate implementation of action plans and objectives into the formal job descriptions of staff. This helps staff arrange their duties so they can make the room for their strategic plan responsibilities. Another option is to offer bonuses (monetary rewards, extra vacation days) for completing strategic plan goals.

While staff is often responsible for implementing action plans, the strategic planning committee is responsible for making sure that staff has the flexibility and resources to do the work. However the strategic planning committee chooses to accomplish this, regular monitoring reports and dashboard reports, like those described above, are essential to keeping plan implementation on track and identifying challenges or any necessary changes that need to be made.

STAGE FIVE: EVALUATION

Evaluation is another point in the strategic planning process where plans tend to fail. After creating the plan, most organizations have momentum to implement it...for the first year. This stage is about taking time to ensure the strategic plan is not only being carried out but is still relevant, year after year, for the life of the plan. Accomplishing this entails, at a minimum, an annual strategic plan evaluation. Sometimes all that's needed is fine-tuning; other times, a more fundamental rethinking of goals and opportunities may be required. This section covers how to conduct an annual evaluation that is productive and ensures the strategic plan remains a *living* document.

Conducting an Annual Evaluation

A good place to start when evaluating a current strategic plan is to determine its success. This can be assessed by reviewing the progress made towards the plan's goals, discussing why the agency has or has not met each one and the reasons for the resulting outcomes. A basic analysis of why goals remain unmet can often reveal important insights into what went wrong and at which level of the plan there may have been a misstep. Once these reasons are uncovered, the strategic planning committee can work to correct and update the plan where needed so it becomes functional again. The evaluation may also unveil weaknesses with the original overall process that can be corrected in the next planning cycle.

While some goals may only require relatively simple and straightforward evaluation, others may take a substantial amount of time and energy. For example, an objective to hold two annual fundraisers would only require staff to determine whether the money raised by the events was greater than the cost of holding them and whether the funds raised were being allocated in the most effective manner.

However, an objective to increase childcare quality by providing training to unlicensed childcare providers would require a complex set of evaluation activities. At a minimum, the evaluation would look at outputs such as the changes made in the providers' practices, number of providers meeting quality standards and their feedback about the training. Ideally, the evaluation would also look at outputs such as the effect on children's school readiness. Because the types of evaluations that may be required by different goals vary so widely, agencies should factor in the evaluation when developing their strategic plans. This is especially true for complex objectives that will require a significant evaluation component.

No matter how an agency chooses to conduct an annual evaluation of their strategic plan, the planning committee should build in regular opportunities to assess overall progress towards goals and make adjustments as necessary. As previously suggested, semi-annual or annual evaluations is one way for this to happen. An annual staff or board retreat is another. It is also important to provide a formal opportunity for the leadership team and board to review the strategic plan as a whole to comply with Organizational Standard 9.3, which requires the agency to present to the

board on an annual basis an analysis of its outcomes and any operational or strategic program adjustments and improvements that were identified as necessary.

APPENDIX A: WORKSHEETS

APPENDIX A1: READINESS ASSESSMENT

| Are the following conditions in place? | YES | NO | N/A |
|---|-----|----|-----|
| Board and staff understand the purpose and goals of the process | | | |
| Agency leadership commits support and involvement | | | |
| Commitment to assemble a planning committee | | | |
| Board and staff are willing to participate on the committee | | | |
| Roles, expectations and who will make decisions during the process are determined | | | |
| Staff have the ability and willingness to gather assessment data | | | |
| Sufficient resources are dedicated to support the entire process | | | |
| Agency leadership and board are open to recommendations made during the process | | | |
| No potentially significant financial problems are on the horizon | | | |
| No high-impact decisions are to be made by external sources in the next 6 months | | | |
| No merger or other strategic partnerships are underway | | | |
| Board is not experiencing high turnover or conflict | | | |
| Commitment to allocate sufficient resources to implement core strategies | | | |

Adapted from *The Strategic Planning Toolkit* by the Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies

APPENDIX A2: WORK PLAN

| # | ACTIVITY | SPECIFIC TASKS | PERSONS INVOLVED | TIME |
|---|----------|----------------|------------------|------|
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Adapted from *Strategic Planning Guide for Texas Community Action Agencies* by the Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs

APPENDIX A3: SWOT ANALYSIS

| | INTERNAL | EXTERNAL |
|---------|------------|---------------|
| HELPFUL | Strengths | Opportunities |
| HARMFUL | Weaknesses | Threats |

Questions to shift thinking from analysis to action:

- How can we capitalize on our strengths and opportunities?
- How can we respond to our weaknesses and threats?
- How can opportunities be used to address weaknesses?
- How can strengths be used to address threats?

APPENDIX A4: CLARIFYING MISSION, VALUES AND VISION

Mission

- Does it identify the population we are committed to serving no matter what?
- Is this population our primary customers?
- Does it specify our core programs or primary services and interventions?
- Are these programs and services that we are known for?
- What are the primary needs of the communities we serve?
- Is it clear what the desired results, outcomes or impacts of our efforts are?
- Does it state the goals we want to achieve for the individual and/or families we serve?
- Does it identify the relationships that help us further our mission?

Values

- What do we believe in as an agency?
- What core values guide our work?
- Do they tell people how we are different from other organizations?
- How do we believe we should treat others?
- How do we want to be treated ourselves?
- What do we value our clients?
- What are our attitudes and values about our performance?

Vision

- How do we want to be as an agency in the future?
- What is the ideal future for our community and/or agency?
- Does it describe how our community and/or agency would look if we accomplished our mission?
- What will success look like for us?
- Does it present an inspiring view of the future?
- Is it brief and easy to communicate?
- Is it shared by members of the community?

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES & REFERENCES

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES & REFERENCES

Resources

Association of Nationally Certified ROMA Trainers
<http://www.roma-nptp.org/>

Community Action Program Legal Services, Inc. Resources by Topic > Community Services Block Grant <http://www.caplaw.org/>

Community Action Partnership. Resources > Organizational Standards
<http://www.communityactionpartnership.com/>

Community Tool Box. KU Work Group for Community Health and Development. University of Kansas.
<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/>

National Association for State Community Services Programs. CSBG > ROMA
<http://www.nascsp.org/>

Virtual CAP. Resource Library > Organizational Practices > Planning & Evaluation
<http://www.virtualcap.org/>

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WWW.CALCAPA.ORG
225 30TH STREET, SUITE 200
SACRAMENTO, CA 95816