Purposeful Planning
How to Focus Board & Staff Efforts to Guide Your CAA to Success

April 27, 2011
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Will the future arrive before your plan is done?

Will it matter?
Pre-Webinar Poll Results

- 17% say their Management Team Rarely or never refers to their plan when working through significant choices
- 38% refer to their plan frequently

More Pre-Polling

- 33% say their Board rarely or never compares actual results to their strategic plan
- 21% say their Board makes plan to actual comparisons frequently

Organization-wide Plans

- What’s in a name?
  - Strategic Plan
  - Business Plan
  - Long Range Plan
  - Comprehensive Plan
Common Elements

- Vision, mission, values
- Needs Assessment/Market Analysis
- Niche/ Competitive position
- Governance
- Management

More Common Elements

- Core services
- Funding/ Financial model
- Financial projections
- Organizational capacities/core competencies
- Progress indicators

Strategic vs. Business Plans

Strategic Plan
- Community Needs
- Niche
- Governance & management
- Core services
- Funding strategies
- Budget

Business Plan
- Market analysis
- Niche/ competitive analysis
- Leadership
- Lines of business
- Financial model
- Financial projections
Why do Organization-wide Planning?

- Required
- Board expects it
- Bring board & staff together
- Integrate multiple plans
- Identify & resolve major choices
- Set goal posts & scoring system
- 1st step in turning the ship

Required?

CSBG requires:

- Maximum feasible participation by low income individuals
- Community Needs Assessment
- ROMA or other similar results-oriented management & accountability system

Desired!

Community Action Partnership Standards of Excellence include effective strategic planning within the 34 Best Practices
Plan Development Elements

- People
- Information & analysis
- Issue/choice identification
- Strategic direction setting
- Goal setting
- Targets – progress indicators
- Plan document
- Plan adoption

Getting the Right People on the Bus

Jim Collins: Good to Great in the Social Sector

Your Planning Bus?

- Who’s on board?
- Who’s driving?
- Who’s navigating?
- Anyone left behind at the stop?
- Anyone getting pushed off?
- Anyone thrown under the wheels?
- Is the bus visible to staff & community?
Planning Roles

- Leadership
- Data collector/analyst
- Facilitator
- Information sources
- Input providers
- Feedback providers
- Decision makers

Planning Plan...

- Role clarification
  - Planning Committee
  - Board
  - Executive Team
  - Line staff
  - Participants
  - Community members

Staffing the Plan

- Staff
- Consultants
- Board
- Volunteers
Worth Paying For?

- Plan Project Management
- Facilitation of key decision-making processes
- Information gathering & analysis
- Plan drafting
- Final plan production

Is “Free” ever really Free?

- Student interns
- Graduate student teams
- Volunteers

Your Plan to Plan

- Clarify desired outcomes
- Establish overall time frame
- Identify:
  - Required elements
  - Desired elements
  - Data & info needs
  - Ownership goals
Your Plan’s Primary Goals?

- Documentation/affirmation/justification
- Investigation/exploration/innovation
- Making choices/redirection
- Building unity & buy-in

Process Goals

- Strengthening relationships among Board and staff
- Deepening connections with low income individuals and community leaders
- Developing Board & Staff Leaders

Begin with the End in Mind

- Focus planning time & resources on resolving the critical choices
- Identify the info & analysis needed for resolution
- Build unity & commitment
Critical Choices
What are the key decisions your CAA must make?
- Services
- People served
- CAA workforce
- Funding strategy
- Infrastructure

What info will you need?

Where will you find it?
Community Needs Info

- Readily available data sources
  - Census
  - Needs assessments
  - 211 data
  - Equity Atlas projects

Community Needs Info

- Direct input from community members:
  - Key informant interviews
  - Electronic & paper surveys
  - Focus groups

Niche/Role Info

- What other resources are available to address the needs you identify?
- What changes are anticipated in the availability of these alternative resources?
- Your CAA’s niche/market position
Before You Ask?

- What do you really want to know?
- How could the info gathering process build community buy-in?
- How will you record & tabulate the info to facilitate analysis?
- What will you do with the info you collect?

What will you do with the info?

- Prepare Brief Briefings
  - Less is often more
  - Map your niche - where does your CAA fit within the universe of needs & resources?
  - Graph the trends
  - Use quotes ... Convey key ideas in community members' own words
  - Highlight emerging issues
Major Program Trends Briefing

- # served
- Eligibility
- Nature of service
- Inter-relationship with other services
- Program model changes
- Compliance issues
- Anticipated major shifts

Financial Briefing

- Your Financial health trends
  - Net Assets
  - Cash
  - Net Income
  - Major sources of funds
  - Major uses of funds
- Major anticipated funding shifts

Core Capacities Briefing

- Core competencies required to support program & financial directions
- Major improvements undertaken
- Key remaining infrastructure limitations
- Monitoring or audit findings
Critical Choices

Forks in the Road?

- Reduce # served or reduce cost per unit of service?
- Eliminate positions or reduce hours, benefits, pay rates?
- Eliminate some services?
- Develop/expand specific services
- Invest more/less in seeking private support?

Critical Choice Pitfalls

- Too many questions
- Asking about details rather than directions?
- Too much “blue sky”
- Not enough relevant information
- Missing the “elephant in the room”
Preparing to Make Choices

- Identify options
- Use Committees, Work Groups, or staff to make recommendations
- Identify info needed to evaluate recommendations
- Use neutral facilitator for discussion of options

Financial Modeling

- Project financial implications of each option
- Personnel & other costs to implement the proposed direction
- Income sources & mechanisms
- Cash flow implications
- Risk assessment

Expressing Directions

- Reduce or eliminate
- Sustain
- Increase
- Enhance
- Explore
- Create
Goal Posts versus Game Plans

Strategic Plan  ≠  Work Plan

- Strategic Plan Sets Key Directions for:
  - Program
  - Finances
  - Infrastructure

- Work Plan provides detailed objectives, timelines, performance measures

Strategic Plan Progress Indicators

- Key indicators for Board monitoring?
- Key indicators for Executive Team monitoring?
- Key indicators for community accountability?
Plan Document Draft...Part 1

- Vision, mission, values
- Community needs/ market analysis
- Niche/ competitive position
- Core competencies
- Management
- Governance

Plan Document Draft.... Part 2

- Key strategic directions
  - Program
  - Financial
  - Infrastructure
- Multi-year financial projections
- Progress Indicators

Consistency Check

- Compare draft plan to existing program plans and budget documents
- Check for anticipated changes in funding requirements & levels
- Determine whether draft plan is consistent with available info
- Internal consistency review
Feedback on Draft Plan

- Board
- Executive Team
- Staff
- Community

Feedback Strategies

- Facilitated discussions
  - Community
  - Line staff
  - Executive team
  - Board
- Structured electronic surveys
- Key community partner interviews

Plan Approval

- Clear timeline & process
- Executive Summary presentation
- Comments from public?
- Recommendation for approval
- Approval
Living Plan Documents

- Brief, well-designed summary
- Progress indicator checklist
- Schedule Board review of progress
- Consult in prep of all funding applications
- Require review during annual budget process

www.compasspoint.org

- Nonprofit Sustainability: Making Strategic Decisions for Financial Viability: Jeanne Bell, Jan Masaoka, Steve Zimmerman
- Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations, 2nd Edition: by Michael Allison and Jude Kaye

Your Next Steps

- Clarify primary goals of your planning process
- Clarify roles: Board, staff, consultants
- Establish timeline for process
- Identify critical choices
- Develop your plan to plan