

ADVISORY

10 STEPS IN VALUES-BASED STRATEGIC PLANNING

by Christina Drouin

Step 1: Development of a Statement of Core Values

Core values serve as a set of guiding principles that will result in a code of behavior among community members. Together with vision and mission, statements of core values serve as a check and balance system against which the value of new projects is gauged. Values clarify and resolve issues, help determine direction, and build community. One cannot be forced to "buy into" the values of an organization. The organization can only seek to identify, recruit and retain those individuals who are pre-disposed to sharing and living its values.

Step 2: Mission Statement Review/Revision

The purpose of this step is to review the organizational mission statement for excellence. The mission statement is a statement of purpose, a broad description of why you do what you do. If necessary, revise the language of the existing mission statement. But do so with caution. A well-written mission statement rarely needs changing.

Test Questions for a Critical Review of an Existing Mission Statement

1. Does it flow from core values?
2. Does it answer the question 'why do we exist'?
3. Is it clear and understandable?
4. Is it memorable?
5. Is it compelling?
6. Is it enduring?
7. Is it on target in today's operating environment?
8. Is it on target in the operating environment of the future?
9. Considering the answers to all these questions, how, if at all, should the mission statement be changed?

Step 3: Information Gathering and Analysis

The purpose of this step is to develop data points that can be analyzed for their future relevance and impact on the sustainable future of the organization. Key elements and tools include: core values alignment; SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats); external STEEP Scan (Social, Technological, Environmental, Economic, and Political factors over which you have no control); competitive analysis; internal focus group research and/or online surveys among all constituencies; and one-on-one interviews.

Step 4: Identification of Strategic Drivers

Strategic drivers are issues that must be resolved that are out of alignment with core values and therefore become focal points of this plan. Also they can be areas of required core competency that the organization is seriously lacking in, or areas of debilitating weakness that, if left unaddressed, would negatively impact on the organization's ability to perform its core mission. The third major category of critical issues falls in the domain of external environment, i.e. any condition, current or anticipated, that exists outside the institution and threatens its ability to perform its core mission or an opportunity that, if taken, could positively impact sustainability.



Step 5: Development of Underlying Assumptions

The purpose of this step is to synthesize what you have learned from research and develop a series of assumptions about the future with regard to the strategic issues you face. These assumptions are tested annually against new information, both based on internal and external changes. Testing assumptions is a critical activity to ensure a plan's ongoing relevancy and build an organization's strategic thinking capacity.

Step 6: Development of a Strategic Vision Statement

The purpose of this step is to develop a strategic vision statement that sets future direction based on a resolution of the strategic issues you face. The vision statement describes what you want your organization to look like in ideal terms in the future – the results you will achieve and characteristics you will need to possess in order to achieve those results. The strategic vision statement provides direction and inspiration for organizational goal setting. Through the vision statement, the organization attempts to respond to the challenges and opportunities expressed in the form of the strategic issues. (NOTE: Although the words “mission” and “vision” are often used interchangeably, they are distinct in an important way: *Mission* describes general purpose and is enduring, transcending boards, administrations, and market conditions; *Vision* describes future direction and describes a stretch from where the organization is today.)

Step 7: Development of Strategic Goals

The purpose of this step is to develop strategic goal statements consistent with the vision statement and

reflective of core values. These will be broad statements of what you hope to achieve in the next three to five years. Goal statements focus on outcomes and are qualitative in nature. Crosscheck goals using the ‘necessary and sufficient’ rule. That is, *is each goal necessary and are all sufficient* to realize the vision?

Step 8: Development of Strategies and Initiatives

The purpose of this step is to identify major directional approaches that will advance each goal. If a goal identifies what is to be achieved, a strategy answers the question ‘How?’ Applying the necessary and sufficient rule keeps builds strategies out to a short list of typically 3-5 for each goal. Initiatives are the programs, activities or changes indicated by strategies.

Step 9: Preparation of Operational Planning Based on the Strategic Plan

The purpose of this step is to develop work plans based on annual priorities with corresponding outcome-based objectives, timelines and assignments. In the hands of an implementation team, this step gets the plan off the shelf and into action.

Step 10: Implementation Planning: Prioritize, Monitor, Evaluate, Report, and Adjust

The purpose of an implementation plan is to ensure the success of your strategic plan. Successful plans have a team charged with oversight and authorized to recalibrate for relevancy and impact based on an annual test of underlying assumptions and the completion rate of strategic initiatives.

