

## **Part 2**

# **Creating and Implementing Strategic Planning**

Ten Key Steps

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# Step 1

## Initiate and Agree on a Strategic Planning Process

### Purpose of Step

The purpose of Step 1 is to develop an initial agreement among key decision makers and opinion leaders about the overall strategic planning effort and main planning tasks and to authorize advocates and facilitators to move forward with the process. Certain external decision makers and opinion leaders may need to be parties to the agreement if their information or support will be essential to the success of the effort. This agreement represents a plan for planning—or a specific *process design*—intended to organize and guide efforts aimed at the ultimate end of creating significant and enduring public value.

This initial agreement is one of the most important steps in the whole strategic planning process. It is in Step 1 that many of the understandings and commitments necessary to produce a good process and plan are developed. Among other things, these commitments define the individuals and groups that will be relied on to carry the process forward. In addition, many critical questions concerning process design are answered. For example:

- Whose plan is it?
- What are the purposes of the process and plan?
- What are the requirements for success?
- How will the process be tailored to fit the situation?
- How will the process be managed?
- How will the process be broken down into phases or tasks?
- What schedule will be adopted?

Adequate commitments and wise process design choices are critical to a successful outcome. The worksheets at the end of this step can guide you in making these commitments and choices.

Four key roles, or functions, must be played if the strategic planning effort is to succeed:

Strategic planning process sponsor(s) (SPS)

Strategic planning process champion(s) (SPC)

Strategic planning coordinating committee (SPCC)

Strategic planning team (SPT)

Two of these roles are typically played by individuals and two by groups. These functions or roles are discussed further in the following sections.

Collectively, the roles and functions help to ensure adequate authority and power to legitimize, fund, and protect implementation efforts; the managerial capacity to oversee day-to-day implementation activity; the ability to handle cross-boundary coordination issues that are essentially strategic rather than operational; and the teamwork necessary to do the heavy lifting around developing detailed, context-specific implementation recommendations and taking necessary implementation actions.

## Strategic Planning Process Sponsor

The strategic planning process sponsor (SPS) must have enough status, power, and authority to commit the organization to strategic planning and to hold people accountable for doing it well. A planning effort may have one or several sponsors. SPSs are typically top positional leaders—and often are the members of a policy board, cabinet, or executive committee acting collectively. They recognize or establish important features of the planning context, make choices and commit resources that improve the chances for success, and pay careful attention to progress along the way. They have a vested interest in achieving success and do what they can to make it happen. They also are typically important sources of knowledge about key issues and effective ways of addressing them and about the organization and its environment in general. They are likely to be especially knowledgeable about how to fit strategic planning efforts to key decision points.

SPSs should be able to do the following (or even have the following job description):

1. Articulate the purpose and importance of the effort.
2. Commit necessary resources—time, money, energy, legitimacy—to the effort.
3. Emphasize throughout the process what the results are and will be that are important to the organization's mission, mandates, and key stakeholders, and what public value will be and is being created.
4. Encourage and reward hard work, smart and creative thinking, constructive dialogue, and multiple sources of input and insight aimed at assuring successful implementation.
5. Be aware of the possible need for outside consultants.
6. Be willing to exercise power and authority to keep the process on track.

## Strategic Planning Process Champion

Strategic planning process champions (SPCs) are persons appointed by the SPSs to lead the implementation effort. An SPC has the primary responsibility for managing planning effort on a day-to-day basis. SPCs are the ones who keep people on course, keep track of progress, and also pay attention to all the details. They model the kinds of behavior they hope to get from other participants: reasoned, diligent, committed, enthusiastic, and good-spirited pursuit of the common good. They push, encourage, and coach implementers and other key participants through any difficulties. SPCs need strong interpersonal skills, a commitment to getting the work done, and a good feel for how to manage complexity within the culture of the organization.

SPCs should have the following job description:

1. Keep strategic planning high on people's agendas.
2. Be committed to a successful process, not to any particular solutions to strategic issues.
3. Think about what has to come together (people, information, resources, completed work) at or before key decision points.
4. Keep rallying participants and pushing the process along.
5. Develop process and agenda champions throughout the organization.
6. Be sensitive to power differences and able to engage all implementers and find ways to share power in order to increase the chances of planning success.

## Strategic Planning Coordinating Committee

If the organization is large, many people need to be involved, and the situation is complex, then a strategic planning coordinating committee (SPCC), or task force, should probably be appointed. But keep in mind that there is a difference between giving people a seat on a committee and consulting with them as part of the process. The gains from involving particular people may be available without actually appointing these people to the SPCC. Unless membership in the committee is limited, it may become too large to be effective. If an organization is the focus of attention, the SPCC typically should include a cross-section of organizational members by level and function and perhaps representatives of key external stakeholder groups as well. That said, the group probably should number no more than nine members. If necessary, the SPCC may have a large representative and legitimizing body and also a small executive committee that engages in the most extensive discussions and makes recommendations to the larger group. For a collaboration or community, a large, representative legitimizing

body could coordinate the process and smaller representative bodies could attend to specific issue areas.

The SPCC should have a charter that includes at least the following responsibilities:

1. Serve as a forum for deliberation, consultation, negotiation, problem solving, or buffering among organizations, units, groups, or persons involved in the strategic planning process.
2. Ensure that all members allocate the quality time necessary to help the SPCC do its job effectively.
3. Where appropriate, approve recommendations and decisions made by the strategic planning team or serve as an advisory body to formal decision makers or policymaking bodies on strategic planning issues.
4. Record all decisions or recommendations in writing and circulate them to key stakeholder groups.
5. Rotate members to keep new ideas flowing and to widen involvement in the process if the group is to be a standing committee overseeing annual or periodic strategic planning efforts.

## Strategic Planning Team

The strategic planning team (SPT) is charged with developing recommendations for key decision makers regarding strategic planning and the strategic plan. The SPT can facilitate, connect, and coordinate structures, processes, resources, or activities across organizational boundaries in ways required for successful strategic plan preparation and adoption. SPT members are selected by the SPS in consultation with the SPC and SPCC, although it is also advisable to seek advice from the rest of the organization and selected external stakeholders, as our experience shows that such broadly based advice is very helpful in getting buy-in and support for the strategic planning process.

The SPT should be able to do the following and perhaps have these responsibilities included in a formal charter:

1. Focus collective attention across all types of boundaries on strategic planning tasks, responsibilities, progress, and needed further action.
2. Help with coordinating the planning process and tasks across boundaries.
3. Make recommendations to the organization's leadership on strategic planning concerns and actions.

4. Rally key participants, and push the planning process along.
5. Provide a venue in which power is shared.
6. Offer a setting in which important conflicts may be explored and managed effectively.
7. Provide occasions for the development of strategic planning champions throughout the organization.

## Possible Desired Planning Outcomes

- Agreement on the purpose, worth, and scope of the strategic planning effort.
- Agreement on the organizations, units, groups, or persons who should be involved or informed. (This requires being clear about whether the planning effort is strictly an internal process or whether it will also involve external stakeholders.)
- Identification of process phases, specific tasks, activities, and schedule.
- Identification of the form and timing of reports.
- Formation of a strategic planning coordinating committee (SPCC) that sets process policy and direction.
- Formation of a strategic planning team (SPT) that coordinates day-to-day process and plan activities and needs.
- Selection, if necessary, of a consultant team of independent process and planning experts who can help to design and facilitate the process.
- Probably, identification of the requirements for success of the process.
- Commitment of necessary resources to begin the effort, and indications that resources necessary for implementation may be found.

## Worksheet Directions

Locate a person or group in your organization (collaboration or community) who is willing and able to act as the *initial process champion*—that is, the person who will initiate early efforts on behalf of the process and act as an advocate for the strategic planning effort. This person must be seen as a desirable, respected, and legitimate choice by those who will be involved in the process. The initiator may not be the ultimate process champion, but he or she has enough enthusiasm, cachet, and interest to get the process going early on.

The first three items in the following directions will help you to make the best use of Worksheet 8.

1. Clearly identify *whose* plan this is. Consider the following questions from the very beginning, and ask the SPT and SPCC as well once they have been formed:

Who are the process sponsor (or sponsors) and the process champion (or champions)?

What part of the organization (or collaboration or community) is the plan for? And is it needed? (*Example:* A plan may be a single strategic plan for your whole organization, or it may be a division or department plan for management only. Both are legitimate if they can address the issues and meet the objectives and expectations.)

Who will support the plan?

2. Make sure that the time frames for the plan and the process are realistic. If they are too long, the plan and the process will not be relevant; if they are too short, the plan may not be strategic enough and is unlikely to have the necessary support. A two- to five-year plan horizon and a six- to twelve-month strategic planning process may be reasonable in many cases. Ask your team:

What information is currently available to us, and how valid and reliable is it?

What information do we need to generate, and how valid and reliable must it be?

What issues are driving planning needs? Are they long term (for example, matters of capital budgeting or major information technology investments) or short term (for example, operational issues)?

How rapidly are changes occurring, and what will the time frame of the plan be?

How do we get the most value from the process?

What are the key requirements for success (for example, leadership commitment, key stakeholder support, new resources, reorganized work processes)?

3. In planning the process:

Don't underestimate the level of effort and the time required to do the job well. That does not mean that the process has to drag on, but you need to allow enough time for adequate information gathering, discussion and dialogue, deliberation and decision making, and follow-through.



Match the time to the purpose, the process, the necessary involvements of people in the process, and the requirements for success.

Allow adequate time, or don't do a strategic plan.

As one of its first tasks, the SPCC should draft a strategic planning process *charter* to which process sponsors, champions, and participants agree. The charter should be drafted in light of the understandings and agreements worked out in response to Worksheet 8. The charter should be short, and at an absolute minimum, should describe the purpose of the process.

4. Use Worksheet 9 to help identify and clarify the SPT's membership, roles and responsibilities, time frame of operation, and reporting relationships, along with any needed or desirable subgroups of the SPT. Note that subgroups may include people who are not official members of the SPT.
5. Have the SPCC and SPT use Worksheet 10 to guide their meetings.
6. Have the SPCC and SPT use Worksheet 11 to summarize their meetings and assign responsibilities for next steps.
7. The SPCC and SPT should use Worksheet 12 to evaluate and improve meeting effectiveness.
8. Worksheet 13 can help the SPCC and SPT (and other involved groups) to turn their meetings into important forums for fostering learning.
9. The SPS, SPC, SPCC, and SPT should jointly use Worksheet 14 to design an effective communications plan to support the strategic planning effort.
10. The SPS, SPC, SPCC, and SPT should use Worksheet 15 in developing an effective *elevator speech* for team members and others to use to communicate the purpose and worth of the strategic planning effort.

**WORKSHEET 8****Plan the Planning Effort**

1. Whose plan is it? (This question is key in determining the scope of the plan and who needs to be involved in the process. You might create an initial strategic planning team to develop a draft *charter* statement as a way to explore this question.)

The plan is for (you may check more than one):

- The whole organization
  - The whole organization, with separate plans for major divisions, units, and so forth
  - Part of the organization (specify the division, unit, or program):
  
  - A business, human resource, or information technology function (specify):
  
  - Strictly internal stakeholders, or will also involve external stakeholders (specify):
  
  - A collaboration (specify members or potential members, including whether governments, nonprofits, or businesses are involved):
  
  - A community (specify):
2. What period of time will the plan cover? (Keep the time horizon realistic; otherwise, the credibility and usefulness of the plan will be undermined.)
- 2 years
  - 5 years
  - Other (specify):

3. What opportunities, challenges, issues, problems, or concerns do you hope the planning process and the plan itself will address? You may want to look again at the readiness assessment worksheets (1 to 7) and questionnaire (Resource A) to see if anything needs to be brought forward and addressed as part of this process.

4. Who is sponsoring the strategic planning process? And do they have the necessary authority and power and the resources and time?

- Senior managers
- Middle managers
- Policy board members
- Staff
- External stakeholders (including funders)
- Others (specify):

**Worksheet 8**

5. Who is the process champion(s)? (Identify as many as you have.) And does each champion have the backing of the sponsors, and does he or she have the necessary ability, resources, and time, as well as the respect of participants?
6. Who will be on the strategic planning project team?
- Policy board members
  - Senior managers
  - Middle managers
  - Staff
  - Other stakeholders, including possibly external stakeholders such as volunteers or funders
  - Consultants
7. What kind and size of strategic planning team works (or will work) best in your organization? Think about who should own and be committed to the plan at the end of the process and what that means for the composition of the strategic planning team.

**Worksheet 8**

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8. Who should be involved in the development of the plan? Again, think about who should own and be committed to the plan at the end of the process and what that means for involvement in the strategic planning effort.
9. Who should or will need to be involved in the review of the plan prior to and during any formal adoption process?

**Worksheet 8**

10. Who are the audiences for the plan? To whom will it be marketed?

11. What settings or forums are available for dialogue and deliberation as the planning process proceeds? Where will the strategic planning team meet? What kinds of forums are necessary for engaging others in the strategic planning process, and where and how might they be held?

**Worksheet 8**

12. How many hours are you willing to give to the strategic planning process, including meetings?
- 1–12
  - 12–24
  - 24–40
  - 40+
13. Are you using internal or external consultants or other resource experts (such as group process facilitators, content experts, survey research firms, or communications experts)?
- Yes. Who will they be and what roles will they play?
  
  - No
  - Unsure. If you are unsure, what kind of help do you think you might need?
14. How will you coordinate with and use consultants and process experts?
15. Who other than the champion will provide administrative support for the day-to-day work of planning effort?

**Worksheet 8**

16. What type of written plan do you envision?

- Short executive summary
- Longer and more detailed but not including most tactical and operational elements
- A detailed plan that includes tactical and operational elements
- Other (specify):

17. What is the expected time frame for the planning process?

- 6 months
- 12 months
- Other (specify):

18. What steps will you use in your planning process? Review these steps with the people who are to be involved, and refine them as needed. (We have found that project management software is an excellent tool for project planning and tracking; also see Exhibit 1.)

| Steps/Tasks | Persons/Groups Involved | Schedule |
|-------------|-------------------------|----------|
|             |                         |          |

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21. What criteria do you think should be used to judge the effectiveness of the strategic planning *process*?

22. What criteria do you think should be used to judge the effectiveness of the strategic *plan*?

**Worksheet 8**

## WORKSHEET 9

### Strategic Planning Team Membership, Roles and Responsibilities, Reporting Relationships, Tasks, and Competencies

| Strategic Planning Team |                                 |   |   |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Members                 | Team Roles and Responsibilities | Starting and Ending Dates of Assignment | Team Reporting Relationships for the Strategic Planning Process |
|                         |                                 |   |   |

| SPT Subgroups | Charge/Task | Membership<br>(not all subgroup members need to be official SPT members) | Each Member's Knowledge Base and Competencies | Roles and Responsibilities | Starting and Ending Dates for Assignment | Reporting Relationships for the Task |
|---------------|-------------|--|---|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Subgroup A    |             |  |   |                            |  |                                      |
| Subgroup B    |             |  |   |                            |  |                                      |
| Subgroup C    |             |  |   |                            |  |                                      |

**WORKSHEET 10**

**Meeting Agenda**

Members present (and absent): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: Start \_\_\_\_\_ End \_\_\_\_\_

Place of meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Premeeting preparation (what to read, research, or prepare):  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

| Time | Topic/Task | Person Responsible | Objective and Expected Outcome<br>(what the group is to know/<br>discuss/create as a result) |
|------|------------|--------------------|--|
|      |            |                    |  |

Date of next meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

**WORKSHEET 11****Meeting Summary**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_ Recorder: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendees: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Action taken/decisions made:

1.

2.

3.

Notes regarding key points:

| Actions to Be Taken                         | Person Responsible | Expected Completion Date |
|---|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Summarize meeting/distribute minutes        |                    |                          |
| Gather information/research a topic         |                    |                          |
| Report to/brief someone/write briefing      |                    |                          |
| Seek input from someone                     |                    |                          |
| Invite resource person(s) to future meeting |                    |                          |
| Implement decision                          |                    |                          |
| Update team work plan                       |                    |                          |
| Next meeting date: _____                    |                    |                          |

## Worksheet 11

**WORKSHEET 12****Meeting Evaluation**

**Instructions.** Meetings can be evaluated by the team leader, a visitor to the team, or by the team members. All can contribute to improving a meeting.

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**Meeting Evaluation by Team Members Responding Individually**

1. To what extent did this meeting achieve the stated objectives?

Not at All      1      2      3      4      5      Completely

2. What was most helpful to you in advancing the work of the team?

3. What aspects were least helpful to you in advancing the work of the team?

4. Suggestions for improvement or other comments:

**Meeting Evaluation by Team Members in a Group Discussion**

1. How did we do in meeting our objectives for this meeting?

2. What can be done to improve our work together?



**WORKSHEET 13****Designing Learning Forums**

**Instructions.** Learning forums are needed wherever it is important to examine information and explore its meaning and significance as a prelude to deciding what present or future action might be needed. Learning forums have the following characteristics (D. P. Moynihan, *The Dynamics of Performance Management* [Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008], p. 179).

- They are routine and not extraordinary events and processes.
- Confrontations are avoided so as not to trigger defensive reactions.
- A collegial environment is established in which status and power differences are minimized.
- Participants include a diverse set of actors responsible for producing useful knowledge and recommendations.
- Dialogue is the norm and the dialogue is focused on how to discern and achieve organizational goals, meet the mandates, and fulfill the mission.
- Assumptions are identified and closely examined, perhaps even suspended for the sake of argument.
- Quantitative information and knowledge are used to the extent possible, including information and knowledge related to goals, issues, outputs, outcomes, strengths and weaknesses, comparisons and contrasts, and baselines.
- Experiential knowledge about how things are working (or not) is welcomed.

Note that meetings of standing groups can be learning forums, as when school boards alternate study sessions (learning forums) with decision-making sessions.

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Answer the following questions:

1. At what places in the strategic planning process and levels in the organization is it necessary or desirable to have ongoing learning forums?

2. Which already existing groups can serve as learning forums for some of the work?
  
3. What new learning forums will be needed? What will they focus on?
  
4. Who will convene each group?
  
5. What kind of training will be needed to help each group embody the characteristics of effective learning groups?
  
6. What is the process by which learning will be translated into advice?
  
7. How will the effectiveness of learning groups be evaluated?
  
8. How will the work of learning groups be acknowledged and celebrated?

**Worksheet 13**

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## WORKSHEET 14

### Strategic Planning Process Communications Plan

**Instructions.** Effective strategic planning depends on effective communications. Indeed, the message from successful practice is basically, “Communicate, communicate, communicate!” Complete the following chart to identify the process and schedule for reporting, who is responsible, and what the medium is.

| <b>Strategic Planning Component</b>                     | <b>Who Is Responsible for Communicating?</b> | <b>Schedule for Communicating (such as weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly, on an as-needed basis)</b> | <b>Who Is the Audience (such as managers, SPCC, board, funders, external partners, general public)</b> | <b>Process for Communicating (such as data collection, data presentation, summaries and recommendations, requests for assistance)</b> | <b>Relevant Performance Indicators</b> | <b>Medium (such as face-to-face meeting, e-mail, Web posting, hard-copy report, annual report)</b> |
|---|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| Organizing the process and analyzing the environment    |  |   |  |   |  |  |
| Clarifying mission, mandates, vision sketch, and values |  |   |  |   |  |  |
| Assessing internal and external environments            |  |   |  |   |  |  |
| Identifying and analyzing strategic issues              |  |   |  |   |  |  |

| Strategic Planning Component              | Who Is Responsible for Communicating? | Schedule for Communicating (such as weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly, on an as-needed basis) | Who Is the Audience (such as managers, SPCC, board, funders, external partners, general public) | Process for Communicating (such as data collection, data presentation, summaries and recommendations, requests for assistance) | Relevant Performance Indicators | Medium (such as face-to-face meeting, e-mail, Web posting, hard-copy report, annual report) |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|---------------------------------|---|
| Developing strategies and action plans    |                                       |  |   |  |                                 |   |
| Reviewing and adopting the strategic plan |                                       |  |   |  |                                 |   |
| Implementing strategies                   |                                       |  |   |  |                                 |   |
| Ongoing operations                        |                                       |  |   |  |                                 |   |
| Other                                     |                                       |  |   |  |                                 |   |
| Other                                     |                                       |  |   |  |                                 |   |
| Comments:                                 |                                       |  |   |  |                                 |   |



4. How will they be helped?

5. Why is this important for those being helped and for the organization?

6. When is the work being done, and when are significant results expected?

The sixty-second elevator speech should include the following points:

**Worksheet 15**