

# **Strategic Planning**

(Adapted from *Strengthening Extension Advisory Leadership 2003 (SEAL) Curriculum*)

## **Objectives:**

- ✓ Define strategic planning
- ✓ Understand differences between Inside-Out Planning and Outside-In Planning
- ✓ Demonstrate skills in utilizing common techniques for setting priorities: brainstorming, 100 votes, multivoting, and nominal group techniques.

## **Advance Preparation:**

- ✓ Review the provided material (typically two hours of preparation time)

## **Materials Needed:**

- ✓ Projection device
- ✓ The enclosed Power Point Presentation
- ✓ Role Play Assignment (Attachment 1)
- ✓ 100 Votes (Attachment 2)
- ✓ Multivoting (Attachment 3)
- ✓ Flip Charts
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Voting Dots
- ✓ Writing Instruments

## **Time Needed:**

- ✓ 1 hour

## **BACKGROUND**

A major role of community leaders is to set priorities and guide others in identifying the most important needs to be addressed in a community. This is typically done by a process called *strategic planning*. Strategic planning is used to determine the mission, values, goals, objectives, roles, responsibilities, and timelines of community organizations. Quite simply, strategic planning is a management tool.

There are common techniques frequently used to help groups determine priorities as a part of the decision-making process in a variety of settings. Brainstorming is the foundation for each of the techniques that will be described below. It provides the means for groups to generate a lot of ideas in a short period of time and encourages creativity as a part of the process. Three processes for narrowing the ideas into manageable numbers and allowing groups to seek additional information before final decisions or choices are made will be shared via techniques of 100 Votes, Multivoting, and Nominal Group Technique.

## **INTEREST APPROACH** *To be completed at the end of the lesson. (Attachment 2)*

1. Directions: Using what you just learned about strategic planning, work through the following situation by utilizing:

- Brainstorming
- Nominal Group Technique
- 100 Votes
- Multivoting

Provide flip charts and markers to the group.

When the group has completed the assignment, elect one spokesperson to discuss a summary to the lead facilitator.

### **Address this Situation**

***Your organization has received \$1 million to implement educational needs in this county. Following the methods of Brainstorming, Nominal Group Technique, 100 Votes/Multivoting; decide how the organization should spend the money for education.***

### **LESSON**

1. The first four slides introduce the concept of strategic planning. This includes defining it, why it is important, and an overview of the process.
2. Slides 5-10 discusses the differences between Inside-Out Planning and Outside-In Planning according to Kaufman & Herman (1991). This is an important concept to discuss for an agency like Texas Cooperative Extension because of the internal and external accountability measures. These internal and external accountability measures are also prevalent in all facets of county governments, school districts and local businesses such as banks, insurance companies, etc.

Inside-Out Planning focuses on the organization as the primary client. It allows a group to look from within the organization outside into the operational world. Inside-out planning usually focuses on the mission, goals, and purposes of the organization. It studies the good of the organization and is typically referred to as *reactive* in nature.

*Example:* In Texas Cooperative Extension, this would be an internal group made up of employees to evaluate the current situation. This group would discuss priorities and make recommendations to the agency as a whole.

Outside-In Planning focuses on society as a primary audience. It looks into the organization from the outside. It typically challenges the status quo and sometimes causes discomfort to current employees because it suggests change. Outside-in planning is typically *proactive* in nature.

*Example:* In Texas Cooperative Extension, this would be an external group that helps set priorities. Texas Community Futures Forum (TCFF) would be an example of bringing people together (outside the agency) to help identify issues and provide future direction for the agency.

The key to strategic planning is integration (slides 9 & 10). Integration of both the outside-in approach and inside-out approach will make organizations most effective in planning strategically. It is most effective to use the outside-in approach first. This allows a more global approach. Then, the planner must look at the inside-out approach and ask “what is” vs. “what should be.” From this, an organization can take the strengths of both methods and set the most effective strategy in place.

3. Slides 11-20 discuss different strategies to implement avenues for listening to and then prioritizing needs, issues, and ideas.

**Brainstorming.** The most frequently used technique for group decision-making is *Brainstorming*. It is the foundation for many other techniques and the basis for

creative problem-solving. In brainstorming, people in the group freely exchange ideas and generate lists in response to an open-ended question. An example of a question that might be used in brainstorming is, "What are possible ways we might raise money to support the 4-H awards program?" Participants try to generate as many ideas as possible, often building or piggybacking on a comment or idea from another participant. This supports creativity and leads to expanded possibilities. This is a fast way of getting ideas on the table (or flip chart) in a short period of time. It is best to use brainstorming when: 1.) You want to generate a large number of ideas or gather a lot of information for decision-making, priority setting or planning, 2.) You want all participants to contribute freely, and 3) You want to inspire creativity.

### **Guidelines for Conducting the *Brainstorming* Activity (Osborn, 1963):**

- a. *Clearly Frame an Open-ended Question.*** Design the question to generate a lot of ideas. Make sure participants understand the question being addressed and the purpose and background of the activity.

For example: "The 4-H program needs \$1500 to purchase ribbons, pins, trophies, etc., and to cover the costs of other expenses associated with their awards program. Tonight we are going to explore possible fund raising activities or events that we might conduct to raise this money. **What are your ideas for possible ways we might raise money to support the 4-H awards program?**"

- b. *Do Not Censure or Make Judgments About Any Ideas.*** State to the group in the very beginning that all ideas are welcome, including those that might be considered outlandish or off-the-wall. These often stimulate the best contributions from the group. The major no-no in brainstorming is making judgments about ideas as they are shared. Such comments as, "That won't work" or "We tried that five years ago and lost money," will stifle creativity and discourage participation.
- c. *List All Ideas Generated on a Flip Chart.*** List ideas in view of all participants. List as rapidly as possible. Encourage all participants to call out ideas without being called upon. Write down every idea, no matter how wild or ridiculous.
- d. *Encourage Hitchhiking.*** Tell participants to build on other ideas that are suggested. Hitchhiking often results in the best ideas. Think outside the box and draw ideas from literature, science, or yesterday's breakfast. Connect ideas that are seemingly unrelated.
- e. *Focus on Quantity.*** The more ideas the better chance of generating creative, workable ideas. Go to a new sheet of flip chart paper before the page is completely full. A full page indicates the end of the task and stifles contributions.
- f. *Stay Loose.*** Don't force people to contribute. A free and open environment supports creativity and leads to the best outcome.
- g. *The Best Comes Last.*** Often the best, most creative ideas come at the end of the *brainstorming* session. Frequently, after an initial burst of ideas there will be a time of silence. Allow the group to be silent for a moment. Most of the time additional ideas will begin flowing and this will generate the eventual solution to the question.

## **Nominal Group Technique**

All groups find that much of their responsibility centers around exploring various options related to issues for the organization and making decisions that provide direction for the group. Generating ideas, understanding each option and the impact it would have on the decision, making choices and setting priorities are functions that require skill from the leader. The nominal group technique is an effective way to make pooled judgments or decisions in groups which meet face-to-face.

This technique is very effective in generating a large quantity of creative new ideas. It is designed to allow every member of the group to express their ideas and minimizes the influence of individual participants. You should use Nominal Group Technique: When you want to generate a lot of ideas and want to assure all members participate freely without influence from other participants and when you want to identify priorities or select a few alternatives for further examination.

**Guidelines for Conducting the *Nominal Group Technique* Activity (Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson, 1975):**

- a. *Provide tables for participants.*** Have participants seated where they can write and provide paper and pencils if needed.
- b. *Develop the focus question.*** Write the question as an issue statement which defines the issue in general but does not offer solutions. Participants should be assured there are lots of alternatives and there is not “one right answer.” The statement should be written on flip chart paper so all group members can see it.
- c. *Silently brainstorm ideas.*** Participants are allowed 5 – 10 minutes to write down all their responses.
- d. *Round robin sharing of ideas.*** Each person shares one idea at a time in a round robin format until all ideas have been listed on flip chart paper. Encourage “hitchhiking” of ideas even if they were not written down. Don’t combine similar ideas at this time – list each separately.
- e. *Discuss and clarify all ideas on the flip chart.*** Each idea is fully discussed. Participants are encouraged to share thoughts, both pro and con about items. Everyone in the group should be clear on the meaning of each item. Ask contributors to further explain if necessary. If the contributors agree some ideas are the same, delete duplication. However, combining of two or more ideas into one should not be done at this time. Number each alternative.
- f. *Ranking of alternatives.*** Each group member is asked to rank order their top ten alternatives. Ten being the most important. This may be done by having participants write the rank beside the idea directly on the flip chart or by listing the idea on a 3X5 index card and writing their rank in the bottom right corner of the card. The facilitator collects the cards and records each ranking beside the alternative, assuring anonymous rankings. The ranks for each alternative are averaged

**NOTE:** *When dealing with a large number of items, it may be necessary to narrow the list through using the Multi-Voting or 100 Votes procedures.*

- g. Ranked items are discussed.** All items receiving a rank are listed so all participants can view. The ranking of each item is designated. (The higher the total, the higher the rank.) Further discussion and clarification of the ranked items is led by the facilitator to ensure that all participants understand what is meant by each priority.
- h. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ranking.** From among the ranked items on the previous list, each participant ranks the ten items he now considers most important. This is done silently and independently as in step 6. (This ranking might be limited to five items per person.) The rankings are again averaged.
- i. Final rankings are discussed.** The group reviews the ranking and discusses the outcome of the activity.
- j. Format for sharing results.** Create a table listing all ranked items, beginning with the item ranked the highest. Include a column indicating the total votes each item received and the number of persons casting a vote for that item.

**100 votes and Multivoting.** Both 100 votes and multivoting offers groups the opportunity to prioritize needs, and ideas. Attachment 3 addresses 100 votes and attachment 4 addresses multivoting.

Slide 21 involves the interest approach exercise outlined in attachment 2.

## **APPLICATION**

In order to be a leader, you must be able to think futuristically and be an agent of change. Strategic planning allows you to do this in a systematic way. These activities allows for clients to be heard and involved in the change process. This is an essential element of leadership.

## **REFERENCES**

Delbecq, A.L., Van de Ven, A.H. and Gustafson, D.H. (1975). *Group Techniques for Program Planning: A Guide to Nominal Group and Delphi Processes*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Company

Kaufman, R. and Herman J. (1991). *Strategic Planning in Education*. Technomic Publishing Company, Inc: Lancaster, PA.

Osborn A.F. (1963). *Applied Imagination*. Old Tappan, NJ: Scribner's.