Having a vision is one of the most powerful components of leadership. All great leaders have visions of what they want to see in the future. Martin Luther King, Jr’s “I have a Dream” speech was a vision of the future. John F. Kennedy wanted to place a man on the moon by the end of the 1960s.

The key is not only to have a vision, but also to write down your vision so you will have a blueprint for achieving it. Having your vision in place will help you decide where you are and where you want to go.

There is a difference between strategic visioning and strategic planning.

Strategic visioning is an active plan for the future of an individual or organization. It starts with (as the name implies) a vision. It is a view of the future that everyone can believe in.

Strategic planning is the process that provides specific direction and meaning to the day-to-day activities of the organization. Strategic planning puts the vision in motion. It identifies all the steps and timelines needed to make the vision a reality. In strategic planning, the typical time frame is 4 years. This includes a year to identify and prioritize issues (while completing programming efforts from the previous plan) and 3 years to develop, implement and evaluate programs.

Creating your personal vision. Before we talk about organizational visioning, let’s first talk about developing your personal vision. A personal vision statement is actually more in-depth and thorough than an organizational vision statement because it forces us to take a close look at ourselves and to make decisions about who we really are and what we believe in.

There are many exercises to help in developing a personal, community or business vision statement. The following steps, modified from Fritz, Brown, Lunde and Basnet (2005), can be followed to write a personal vision statement.

- **Step 1:** Write a first paragraph on the principles that guide your life to define who you are.
- **Step 2:** Write one paragraph that lists your five most important roles.
- **Step 3:** Describe each of these five roles in individual paragraphs.
- **Step 4:** Write a last paragraph that focuses on your vision and answers the question: “What are five things you would like to do to make a difference in the world.”
Creating an organizational vision. Lussier and Achua (2001) define an organizational vision as “an ambitious view of the future that everyone in the organization can believe in and that offers a future that is better in important ways than what now exists.” It is important that organizational vision statements be developed by the group so that people from all levels of the organization are involved in the process.

An organizational vision
- prioritizes the values of an organization,
- inspires everyone to feel important because they are a part of the visioning process,
- links the present to the past by rationalizing the need for changing old ways of doing work, and
- establishes excellence in the work the organization does.

An organizational vision statement is typically much shorter than a personal vision statement because the vision is for the entire organization and a long statement will not clearly communicate the vision of the organization. The organizational vision statement should have the following components:
- who the organization is,
- what the organization does, and
- where the organization is going.

A vision is the starting point of change for an organization. Here is a process organizations may elect to go through when change needs to happen.

- **Step 1.** Write a vision statement.
- **Step 2.** Set goals.
- **Step 3.** Develop a strategic plan for reaching the goals (the plan should contain specific objectives).
- **Step 4.** Implement the strategy.
- **Step 5.** Measure results and return to Step 1.

To remain viable and effective, organizations must think strategically and evaluate where they are and what they are about. This starts with an organizational vision.

**References**