



## Why Do Strategic Planning?

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As spring approaches our thoughts naturally turn to the future, of renewal, and of rebirth. It is also natural to think about our organization's future and ask ourselves questions like: What kind of future are we planning for our organization? How can we plan for a healthier future? How can we anticipate problems before they happen?

The irony is that at the same time we ask ourselves these questions, we know the answer – strategic planning. We know that it's time to dust off that plan we worked so hard to put together a few years ago and bring it anew. Or, better yet, we know it's time to start from the beginning – assessing our mission – and work until we have developed a new and timely action plan.

How to get started? Here are a few suggestions that we have found to be successful strategies to get a process moving:

- Introduce the idea of a board retreat  
Determine how many board members would be willing to spend 4-6 hours together and if the majority are interested, set a date that most can attend.
- Form a governance committee  
Charge them with the responsibility of putting together an agenda that would initiate some strategic thinking sessions.
- Plan a strategic thinking session  
In place of a regular board meeting, put time aside to discuss the value of strategic planning for your organization. Appoint a steering committee to determine a budget and time line for your strategic plan.
- Bring in an expert  
Sometimes bringing in an expert is just what the doctor ordered – a new face, a new voice, a new way to look towards the future.

There are many reasons to do strategic planning, but without the buy-in of both board members and staff, it's just a document sitting on a shelf. The time a plan is needed the most is often when staff and volunteers feel most put upon to be doing other things, like fund raising, recruiting, and figuring out how to do more with less. But without a plan that guides its direction, your organization is like a ship without a rudder and your team of staff and volunteers are just looking to bale water.

Give your organization, your staff and volunteers the tools they need: your board the ability to leave the organization in a better position that it was when they began; your staff to feel they're making a difference; and your organization an opportunity to make an impact in the community you serve. Make a commitment to a strategic plan, carry it out and watch your action plans unfold. It can make all the difference in the world.