

Strategic Planning

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Define strategic planning
- ✓ Understand differences in 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 in 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 within the organization outside into the operational world. Inside-out planning usually focuses on the mission, goals, and purposes. 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 to (outside the agency) to help identify issues and provide future direction for the agency.

The key to this 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 at looking at 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 and 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.) When you want to generate a larger number of ideas or gather a lot of information for decision-making, priority setting or planning, 2. When you want all participants to contribute freely, and 3) When 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 we might consider 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.*** Ideas listed should be 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 responsibilities center 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 other participants. You should use Nominal Group Technique: When you want to generate a lot of ideas to 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. 2nd 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 opportunities 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 21.

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.

Attachment 1- Role Play Assignment

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

- Brainstorming
- Nominal Group Technique
- 100 Votes
- Multivoting

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

Address this Situation

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Attachment 2-

100 Votes (adapted from *Strengthening Extension Advisory Leadership 2003 (SEAL) Curriculum*)

Once groups generate a lot of ideas or have a list of several possibilities, they are faced with the problem of setting priorities and coming to an agreement on the most important items or options. With this technique each participant has the ability to cast their 100 votes by dividing them up to indicate a priority among the items. They can also support other items they feel are of lower priority with fewer votes. The total votes for each item indicate a degree of importance for the group. The participants use this information in setting priorities. You should use 100 votes when you have a list of options and need to set priorities and when you want an indication of the priorities of the group.

Guidelines for Conducting the 100 Votes Activity:

1. **Brainstorm a list of options.** The *Brainstorming* activity is an excellent way of generating possible solutions to a problem or options in a decision-making process.
2. **Review the list from a Brainstorming activity.** Once you have completed the list, clarify ideas, merge similar ideas, and make sure everyone understands the options.
3. **Ask participants to Vote.** Each participant may allocate their 100 votes in any manner they wish and for any number of items they wish. If they feel strongly about one or two items they might want to give them 25 votes each. An item or two they feel worth considering but not a high priority might receive 10 points each and two items that are good but not the most important might receive 15 votes each. If there are items the participant feels shouldn't be considered, they would not receive any votes. The major consideration should be that the highest priority options receive the most votes. Voting takes place by participants physically writing the number of votes they are casting on the paper by the item. Make sure all items are posted where participants can see them and cast their votes.
4. **Total the votes for each item.** Add the votes cast for each item and the number of people who voted for that item. Write both on the paper by that item. (5/125 means five people cast a total of 125 votes) Circle the total for easier identification.
5. **Review the voting and items which are the highest priority.** Ask participants to review the data they generated and reflect on the outcome. What should be the cut off? What does the data tell you in terms of high priorities? How does the number of people voting for an item influence the priorities versus the total number of votes.
6. **Select priorities.** Ask participants to discuss how they feel regarding the outcome of the voting. Do they feel it reflects the priorities from the group as a whole? Decide as a group where the cut-off should be in the list of priorities.

Attachment 3- Multivoting

(adapted from Strengthening Extension Advisory Leadership 2003 (SEAL) Curriculum)

By design, *Brainstorming*, generates a long list of ideas. However, also by design, many are not realistic or feasible. The *Multivoting* activity allows a group to narrow their list or options into a manageable size for sincere consideration or study. It will not help the group make a single decision but can help the group narrow a long list of ideas into a manageable number that can be discussed and explored. It allows all members of the group to be involved in the process and ultimately saves the group a lot of time by allowing them to focus energy on the ideas with the greatest potential. Multivoting is used when the group has a long list of possibilities and wants to narrow it down to a few for analysis and discussion or when a selection process needs to be made after *brainstorming*.

Guidelines for Conducting the *Multivoting* Activity:

1. **Brainstorm a list of options.** Conduct the *Brainstorming* activity to generate a list of ideas or options.
2. **Review the list from the *Brainstorming* activity.** Once you have completed the list, clarify ideas, merge similar ideas, and make sure everyone understands the options. **Note:** at this time the group is not to discuss the merits of any idea, just clarify and make sure everyone understands the meaning of each option.
3. **Participants vote for the ideas that are worthy of further discussion.** Each participant may vote for as many ideas as they wish. Voting may be by show of hands or physically going to the list and marking their choices or placing a dot by their choices. If they so desire, participants may vote for every item.
4. **Identify items for next round of voting.** Count the votes for each item. Any item receiving votes from half the people voting is identified for the next round of voting. For example, if there are 12 people voting, any item receiving at least six votes is included in the next round. Signify the items for the next vote by circling or marking them with a symbol, i.e., all items with a star by the number will be voted on the next round.
5. **Vote again.** Participants vote again, however this time they may only cast votes for half the items remaining on the list. In other words, if there are 20 items from the last round that are being voted on, a participant may only vote for ten items.
6. **Repeat steps 4 and 5.** Participants continue voting and narrowing the options as outlined in steps 4 and 5 until there is an appropriate number of ideas for the group to analyze as a part of the decision-making or problem solving process. Generally groups need to have three to five options for further analysis.
7. **Discuss remaining ideas.** At this time the group engages in discussing the pros and cons of the remaining ideas. This may be done in small groups or the group as a whole.
8. **Proceed with appropriate actions.** At this point the group goes to the next steps. This might be making a choice of the best option or identifying the top priorities.

