



STRATEGIC PLANNING: A CONTINUOUS PROCESS

“IT IS IN YOUR MOMENTS OF
DECISION THAT YOUR
DESTINY IS SHAPED.”

-TONY ROBBINS

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THE NEXT FEW PAGES OUTLINE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PROBLEM SOLVING THAT ARE USED BY MONTANA CSPD.

1. **Current Reality**

Taking an honest look at reality: strengths, vulnerabilities, trends, and big questions.

Other terms: needs assessment, environmental scan

2. **Vision**

Creating a picture of the future: what will it look like?

Other terms: dream, intentions, desires

3. **Blocks**

Getting to the root cause: what is standing in the way of the vision?

Other terms: issues, challenges, barriers, contradictions

Another way to think of blocks is to use the metaphor “face of the enemy.” Pogo is credited with having said something like: “We looked the enemy in the face and they were us.” Uncovering blocks requires an honest look at the current reality in order to expose the real, or root, cause—that which is keeping us from moving toward our vision.

4. **Strategic Directions**

Identifying the new: what will it take to get around the blocks?

Other terms: goals

Things to look for: verbs, action that is substantive and systemic

Brainstorm actions (bold moves) and create goals.

5. **Action Plan**

Focus on directions or goals and determine priority actions.

Other terms: objectives

Things to consider: timelines, doable action, relevant action

At a minimum, the plan should contain a list of priority actions with projected timelines.

6. **Implementation Plan**

Making commitments to carry out priority actions.

Things to consider: keeping implementation focused on 3-month intervals

At a minimum, the plan should contain the specific steps for implementing a priority action, a timeline, who is responsible, and who needs to be involved. This plan may also contain indicators of completion.



STRATEGIC PLANNING CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Current Reality: What do we know about the situation? What data do we have? What perceptions do we have? What led to the problem? What is working? What is not working? What questions do we have? What might be happening around us that we need to consider when resolving this problem?

Vision: What do we want to be different when this problem is resolved? What is our expected outcome? What do we want things to look like—both immediately and over the long term? (Note: in a problem-solving process, it may be necessary to recognize an immediate “quick fix,” as well as a more long-term desired change.)

Blocks: What is the root cause of our problem? What are we doing to create the problem, or how are we contributing to the problem, inadvertently or intentionally?

Strategic Directions: What ideas do we have to resolve this problem? (Include both short- and long-term actions if needed; use this as a brainstorm activity.)

Action/Implementation Plan: Of all the ideas we generated, which are the most doable? Which will most likely lead to the desired result? Is there a need to take a short-term action while we work on a more long-term solution? If we look at what we know from past experience, are there any actions that might lead to unintended consequences?

Using the above questions can help narrow the brainstorm list to a few that are doable, realistic, and most likely to resolve the problem. When you have chosen the desired action, then complete the implementation plan by asking: What steps do we agree to take? Who is going to do what? By when? How will we know if the problem is resolved? Do we need any further meetings?