Principles
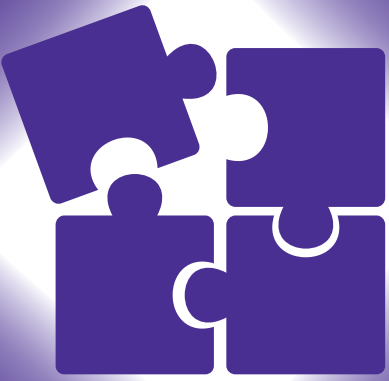
Organizational planning defines the overall direction, activities, and strategies that will be used to fulfill a nonprofit's mission. Nonprofits should engage in sound planning to define a clear vision for the future and specific strategies for reaching established goals. Nonprofit planning should be proactive rather than reactive. It should incorporate evaluation results and periodic analyses of community needs. The process should be intentional and ongoing in order to best position a nonprofit to achieve its goals.

Impact

1. Mission Statement

A nonprofit should have a clearly defined, written mission statement that accurately describes the core purpose of the organization.

2. Vision Statement

A vision statement is a clear, motivating message about a desired future state that projects a world enhanced by the accomplishment of the mission.

3. Values Statement

A values statement (or statements) reflects those core beliefs or principles that drive the work of the organization. It should describe the manner in which the nonprofit will conduct its work by highlighting those attributes that are most important.

4. Review of Mission, Vision, and Values

Originally defined by its incorporators, a nonprofit's mission, vision, and values should be reviewed by the board periodically to consider societal and community changes. This review should determine whether these statements are still relevant, and/or whether they should be adapted to address evolving needs of its constituents and the public.

Strategic Planning Process

5. Soliciting Input/Feedback from Community

In planning and evaluating its activities, a nonprofit should be responsive to community needs. It should solicit input and feedback from a variety of sources, such as board, staff and volunteers, community members, funders and donors, government officials, and other stakeholders. This input should be inclusive of a broad range of views

and perspectives and should play an integral role in the organization's decision-making process.

6. Environmental Assessment/Scan

A nonprofit should have a thorough and up-to-date understanding of the community in which it operates including the needs of its constituents, changing demographics, changes in the funding and political/regulatory environments, services provided by government, emerging technology, and applicable trends. To promote overall success within the sector, a nonprofit should look to other nonprofits to share and gather information on lessons learned, best practices, effective resource allocation, and prevention of the duplication of services.

Strategic Plan Document

7. Strategic Plan

A nonprofit should create a mission-driven written strategic plan every three to five years. The strategic plan should:

- Reflect the results of an environmental assessment that includes information on strengths and challenges facing the organization, as well as opportunities for, and perceived threats to, mission achievement;

- Include clearly defined, reasonably achievable, measurable goals and objectives that are set by the organization to achieve its current organizational priorities;

- Provide an overarching direction for the organization created and fulfilled by staff and board members that is reflective of the organization's stated mission; and

- Be flexible to adapt to unforeseen changes and take advantage of unanticipated opportunities.

Implementation

8. Operational Plan

A nonprofit should annually create a written operational plan, which aligns with the strategic plan and specifies how its activities will be implemented on an annual basis. The operational plan should:

- Clearly define specific program, financial, personnel, and evaluation activities; delineate timelines; and assign specific responsibility for implementation;

- Clearly identify goals and performance measurements;

- Be tied to an annual approved budget;

- Provide a framework for regular progress reports; and

- Be reviewed and updated regularly by staff and board members.