

This example can be used as a starting point to create a policy or other document for your own land trust, but should be altered as necessary to reflect your organization's unique circumstances using guidance found in the *Land Trust Standards and Practices Guidebook* text and corresponding Standards and Practices Curriculum.

Please Note: If you are using this material for accreditation purposes, see also [the Land Trust Accreditation Commission website](#) for additional information. To search for policies from accredited land trusts, insert <<accredited>> along with the search term (e.g., conflict interest policy accredited).

## Framework for a Basic Nonprofit Strategic Plan Document

Written by [Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD](#)

### Directions

The following framework will guide you through completion of your basic strategic plan document. Each section includes directions. Many sections include examples, as well. In addition, sections includes links to related, additional information to help the reader fill out that section of the framework. .

Readers are encouraged to work with a planning team in their organization to fill in this framework. After completing this framework, readers can move information from the framework to a more suitable document to be the final version of the strategic plan document, if desired.

(Note that there are a wide variety of perspectives and approaches regarding strategic planning. The library topic [Strategic Planning](#) provides overviews of many of these perspectives and approaches.)

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**[NAME OF YOUR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION]**

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

**for the period  
[insert dates]**

**[insert date that plan was authorized by board by directors]**

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**Executive Summary**

*(Complete this section after you have finished the other sections of the plan document. The Executive Summary describes plan highlights to funders, board members, employees and other stakeholders. The Executive Summary should be one to two pages in length at most. It should include very concise descriptions of the most important information from the strategic planning process and its results. For example, include very brief descriptions of what's in this document and how to use the document, strategic issues and goals, when the plan will be implemented, how the implementation will be monitored and by whom, and any specific actions required by upper management.)*

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**Board Authorization of Strategic Plan**

*(Authorization designates board member's approval of the strategic direction and action plans described in this strategic plan document.)*

*Name of Board Member:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date Signed:* \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Organizational Description**

*This section should include information that will be informative, particularly to readers from outside of the organization.*

- *Brief overview of history of organization*
- *Description of major programs and services*
- *Overview of major accomplishments and other highlights during history of organization*

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### **Mission Statement**

*The mission statement is a concise description of the purpose of the organization. It answers the question: Why does our organization exist? When answering this question, include the nature of your services, groups of clients that you serve and how you serve them. The mission statement should provide continued direction and focus to your plans, programs and services from your organization. Post your mission statement throughout your nonprofit, on all stationery, in your plan documents, etc. (For additional assistance, see [Writing Mission Statements](#).)*

*Example: "To support individual and community development in Minneapolis by ensuring all adults between the ages of 18 and 65 achieve gainful employment in the community."*

Your Mission Statement:

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### **Vision Statement**

*The vision statement is an inspirational, compelling answer to the question: What do you hope for your clients? Ideally, it should be written in a compelling, inspirational fashion. Post your vision statement throughout your nonprofit. (For additional assistance, see [Writing Vision Statements](#).)*

*Example: "Every adult in Minneapolis is fulfilled from employment that contributes to their individual and community development."*

Your Vision Statement:

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**Values Statement**

*The values statement depicts the priorities in how the organization carries out activities with stakeholders. The board and chief executive should regularly reference the values statement to provide guidance to the nature of how the nonprofit and its programs should operate. (For additional assistance, see [Writing Values Statements.](#))*

*Example: "We believe that:*

- Employment provides opportunity for adults to develop community and themselves.*
- Every person deserves opportunity for gainful employment.*
- Gainful employment of all citizens is a responsibility of all citizens."*

**Your Values Statement:**

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**Goals and Strategies**

***Your Goals Should Be "SMARTER"***

*When you design and word your goals, be sure they are "SMARTER", that is, specific, measurable, acceptable to the people working to achieve the goals, realistic, timely, extending the capabilities of those working to achieve the goals and rewarding to them.*

*Don't worry so much about having to specify goals to be exactly "correct". Your goals are likely to be modified somewhat as you give more attention later on to program design.*

***You Will Have Organization-Wide and Program/Service-Specific Goals***

*You will probably have organization-wide goals, for example, goals in regard to building and running your nonprofit, for example, board development, staffing, getting a new building, etc. You also will probably have service goals that directly in regard to providing products or services to your clients, for example, providing transportation service to clients, training services to clients, etc. Note that the service goals are very important later on when designing program design, marketing and evaluation plans.*

***Write Down Goals to Address Issues***

*Below, write down the strategic goals that must be achieved in order to address the issues listed in Appendix C. Think about what must be achieved in order to address the issues. Consider goals over the term of your strategic plan, but look very closely at the next year especially. (For additional assistance, see [Strategizing](#).)*

***Write Down Forward-Looking Goals***

*Next, write down more forward-looking goals. If you are developing a new nonprofit, then you'll probably have goals to build a board, do a strategic plan, do a market analysis to build a program, get volunteers, hire staff, etc. Consider goals over the term of your strategic plan, but look very closely at the next year especially. (For additional assistance, see [Strategizing](#).)*

***Next, Associate Strategies with Each Goal***

*Next, under each goal, write down the major approaches (or strategies) that must be used to achieve each goal. Consider strategies over the term of the strategic plan, but especially over the next year. (For additional assistance, see [Strategizing](#).)*

***Now Consider: Are the Goals and Strategies Closely Aligned with Nonprofit's Mission, Vision and Values?***

*Does each goal and its associated strategies really contribute toward the mission and vision of the organization. Will the goals be reached by using strategies that are closely aligned with the values of the organization? If not, then very closely reconsider whether you want to pursue those goals and associated strategies.*

***Example Goal and Strategies***

*Example Program Goal #1: Support at least 600 drop-outs from Minneapolis high schools to obtain diplomas or equivalent levels of certification in the calendar year 2000.*

*Example Strategy #1.1 -- Conduct high-school equivalency training programs to drop-outs from Minneapolis high schools in the calendar year 2000*

*Example Program Strategy 1.2 -- Provide free transportation to enrollees in the program*

*Example Program Strategy 1.3 -- Provide subsidized child care to enrollees in the program*

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**Goals and Strategies (Cont.)**

*(Make copies of this page as needed.)*

Your Goals and Strategies

Goal # \_\_ (Write them to be "SMARTER")

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Strategy # \_\_. \_\_

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Strategy # \_\_. \_\_

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Strategy # \_\_. \_\_

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Strategy # \_\_. \_\_

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**Action Planning (objectives, responsibilities and timelines)**

*In the section labeled "Your Action Plans" below, write down action plans, especially for the next year. Action plans specify how the strategic goals and strategies will be carried out. Action plans often include various objectives to be reached while achieving each goal, who is responsible for achieving each objective and by when. Write objectives to be "SMARTER". (For additional assistance, see [Action Planning](#).)*

**Example Action Plan**

*Example Program Goal #1: Support at least 600 drop-outs from Minneapolis high schools to obtain diplomas or equivalent levels of certification in the calendar year 2000*

*Example Strategy #1.1 (for Goal #1): Conduct high-school equivalency training programs to drop-outs from Minneapolis high schools in the calendar year 2000*

<i>Objectives for Strategy 1.1</i>	<i>Date of Completion</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Status and Date</i>
<i>1.1.1. Complete program plan</i>	<i>2/1/99</i>	<i>Program Director</i>	
<i>1.1.2. Hire training director</i>	<i>3/31/99</i>	<i>Program Director</i>	
<i>1.1.3 - Develop training program</i>	<i>1/1/00</i>	<i>Program Director</i>	
<i>1.1.4 - Contract with high schools to get referrals about drop outs</i>	<i>9/1/99</i>	<i>Program Director</i>	
<i>1.1.5 - Pilot and evaluate pilot program</i>	<i>3/1/00</i>	<i>Program Director</i>	
<i>1.1.6 - Train at least 600 drop outs</i>	<i>12/31/00</i>	<i>Program Director</i>	
<i>1.1.7 - Test to ensure at least 600 qualify for high school diplomas</i>	<i>12/31/00</i>	<i>Program Director</i>	
<i>1.1.8 - Finish program evaluation</i>	<i>2/15/01</i>	<i>Program Director</i>	

*Other example strategies to meet goal #1 might include:*

*Example Program Strategy 1.2 -- Provide free transportation to enrollees in the program*

*Example Program Strategy 1.3 -- Provide subsidized child care to enrollees in the program*

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**Action Planning (who is going to do what and by when)**

*(Make copies of this page as needed.)*

**Your Action Plans**

Goal # \_\_ (Write them to be "SMARTER")

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Strategy # \_\_ . \_\_

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<i>Objectives for Strategy</i> __ . __	<i>Date of Completion</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Status and Date</i>

**Appendix B - Description of Strategic Planning Process Used**

*This appendix might include, for example,*

- *description of how the strategic plan document was developed*
- *who was involved in the planning*
- *any major problems and lessons learned during the planning process*
- *etc.*

**Appendix C - Strategic Analysis Data -- External Analysis**

*An external analysis looks at societal, technological, political, and economic trends effecting the organization, e.g., trends in donations, recent or pending legislation, federal funds, demographic trends, rate of access to trained labor, and competition. In your external analysis, don't forget to look at stakeholders' impressions of the organization, including funders', clients', community leaders', volunteers', etc. (For additional assistance, see [Environmental Scan](#).)*

From our external analysis, we identified the following trends and how they might effect our nonprofit:

Political trends:

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Economic trends:

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Societal trends:

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Technological trends:

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**Appendix C - Strategic Analysis Data -- External Analysis (Cont.)**

Other trends: (trends in donations, recent or pending legislation, federal funds, demographic trends, rate of access to trained labor, competition, stakeholders' impressions of the organization, etc.)

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Weaknesses of the organization:

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Opportunities for the organization: \_\_\_\_\_

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Threats facing the organization:

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Organizational strengths:

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**Appendix C - Strategic Analysis Data -- Listing of Strategic Issues**

*New nonprofits, in particular, are often better off to first look at the major obstacles or issues that it faces, and next identify the more forward-looking, developmental goals to accomplish over the next few years. For example, current issues might be that the chief executive is not being paid, the board is not achieving a quorum, there is no money at all, etc. Developmental goals for a new nonprofit might be, for example, build a board, do a strategic plan, do a market analysis to build a program, get volunteers, hire staff, etc.*

*To identify the key issues identified from your strategic analyses, consider the following guidelines:*

- a) From considering the effects of weaknesses and threats that you identified, what are the major issues that you see? List as many as you can. Consider issues over the term of your strategic plan, but look very closely at the next year especially. Many organizations have stumbled badly because they ended up "falling over their feet" while being focused much too far down the road.*
- b) Consider each of issues. Ask whether it's "important" or "urgent." Often, issues seem very important when they're only urgent, for example, changing a flat tire is an urgent issue -- but you'd never put "changing a tire" in your strategic plan. Attend only to the important issues and not the urgent issues.*
- c) Deal with issues that you can do something about. Issues that are too narrow do not warrant planning and issues that are too broad will bog you down.*

*d) Issues should be clearly articulated so that someone from outside of the organization can read the description and understand the nature of the issue.*

*(The following links may be useful at this point when identifying issues: [Unique Nature and Struggles of Traditional Small Nonprofits](#) and [Life Cycles of Organizations](#).)*

Key issues that our organization must address through use of this strategic plan include:

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**Appendix D -Goals for Board Committees and Chief Executive Officer**  
***Organize Appropriate Board Committees***

*Board committees should be developed that associate with each of the major areas of strategic goals. For example, if a strategic goal is to build and develop the board, then consider a Board Development Committee. For example, if strategic goals include developing new programs, then consider a Programs and Marketing Committee. (Of course, you will have other types of board committees to address ongoing major activities that are not directly associated with types of strategic goals, for example, an executive committee.)*

***Build Board Work Plans***

*One of the best ways to ensure that board committees are fully participative and effective is through use of work plans for each board committee. With the board members, design work plans for each committees. Write goals and/or objectives to be "SMARTER". A work plan is the plan that each board committee references to guide completion of their contribute to the organization's strategic plan. For example:*

*Example Program Goal #1: Support at least 600 drop-outs from Minneapolis high schools to obtain diplomas or equivalent levels of certification in the calendar year 2000*

*Example Strategy #1.1 (for Goal #1): Conduct high-school equivalency training programs to drop-outs from Minneapolis high schools in the calendar year 2000*

*Board Committee: Program and Services Committee*

*Board Chair: John P. Services*

<i>Action for Goal #1, Strategy #1.1</i>	<i>Date of Completion</i>	<i>Status and Date</i>
<i>Review and approve program plan</i>	<i>1-15-99</i>	

<i>Review results of pilot evaluation and approve continuation of program</i>	<i>2-15-00</i>	
<i>Review results of program evaluation and approve continuation of program</i>	<i>2-1-01</i>	

***Work Plans for Your Board Committees***  
*(Make copies of this page as required.)*

Board Committee \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Goal # \_\_\_\_ *(Write them to be "SMARTER")*

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Strategy \_\_ . \_\_

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Action	Date of Completion	Status and Date

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**Goals for the Chief Executive**

The board is responsible to provide ongoing governance and direction the nonprofit organization. Usually, the board decides to carry out their responsibilities by including the role of a chief executive in the nonprofit organization. The board is responsible to oversee the performance of the chief executive and evaluate the performance of the chief executive on a regular basis.

The chief executive should be attending to responsibilities and goals that are directly aligned with the strategic goals of the organization (as should the responsibilities and goals of everyone else in the organization). Therefore, after strategic goals have been identified, it's timely for the board to update the performance goals of the chief executive (who, in turn, updates the performance goals of everyone else in the management and staff of the nonprofit organization). (For additional information, see [Performance Management](#), [Board of Director's Evaluation of Chief Executive](#) and [Employee Performance Management](#).)

Goals may need to be reworded to be more specific to the authority and resources of the chief executive role.

Goals should be designed and worded to be "SMARTER", that is, specific, measurable, acceptable to the chief executive, realistic, timely, extending the capabilities of the chief executive and rewarding for him or her to accomplish.

**Your Goals for Your Chief Executive**

(Write goals to be "SMARTER".)

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**Appendix E - Staffing Plans**

Reference each of the strategies to reach the goals and consider what kind of capabilities are needed to implement the strategies. This might seem like a lot of guesswork, particularly if you don't have experience in supervision. However, don't worry so much about being exactly correct -- you will likely refine your staffing plan later on as you design and plan your programs in the nonprofit development process. If you are developing a new nonprofit, you might think about including the following typical roles in your initial staffing plan (but again, consider these roles in terms of implementing the strategies in your plan): chief executive, administrative assistant and program directors for each of your major service goals. However, it's common that the chief executive is also a program director for the first year or so. You may end up refining the staffing plan as you complete action planning, along with identifying who will accomplish each of your objectives. (The following links may help you when developing your staffing plan. See [Traditional Design of a Small, Incorporated Nonprofit Business Organization](#) and [Organizing Staff.](#))

Note that in the following table, staffing is specified in terms of full-time equivalents (FTEs). One FTE is equal to one full-time staff position throughout the year. If staff will start half-way through a year, than include .5FTE, etc.

Staff Position	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<b>Central Administration, General Operating Activities:</b>			
<b>Staff for Program [insert name]: (have a section for each program)</b>			

**Appendix F - Operating Budgets**

*In the table labeled "Your Budget Planning" included below, list the resources you will need to achieve the goals in the strategic plan and the costs to get and use the resources - especially over the next year. You don't have to be exactly accurate -- besides, you may end up changing your budget as you give more attention to program design and planning. You should do a budget for each of the years included in the span of time covered by your strategic plan -- but give particular attention to the first year of the time span.*

*Look at each of your service, or program, goals. Think about how much revenue the program might make from fees, grants, donation, etc. Next, think about the expenses to run the program, such as human resources, facilities, equipment, special materials for programs, marketing and promotions, etc. Note that this budget information usually can be used later on with program budgets and grant proposals. In an upcoming module about program planning, we'll likely modify your operating budget to include updates from program planning, including developing program budgets.*

*Now think about what resources will be needed for central administration. Will you need a chief executive officer, assistants, program directors, etc?*

*(For additional information, see [How Do I Prepare a Budget?](#))*

**Example Operating Budgets**

*The following multi-year budget is an example to help you think about the types of resources you may need to achieve the goals in our plan and to help you think about how you'll develop your operating budgets.*

*Note that the following budget includes 40% "fringe" -- this is the extra amount budgeted to cover benefits, for example, medical insurance, social security taxes, retirement contributions, etc. You should find estimates of the current fringe rate for salaries -- or, you can budget specific amounts for each of the specific benefits.*

*Also note that the following is a rather simple budget format and should be modified to suit the needs and nature of your organization.*

<b>REVENUE:</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>
<i>Federal grants</i>			
<i>State grants</i>			
<i>Local grants</i>			
<i>Private foundations</i>			

<i>Other grants</i>			
<i>Program fees from program [insert name]</i>			
<i>Program fees from program [insert name]</i>			
<i>Program fees from program [insert name]</i>			
<i>Program fees from program [insert name]</i>			
<b>TOTAL REVENUE:</b>			
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
<b>Central Administration -- Personnel:</b>			
<i>Chief executive officer (include yearly salary + 40% for benefits, etc.)</i>			
<i>Administrative assistant (include yearly salary + 40% for benefits, etc.)</i>			
<i>Travel</i>			
<i>Staff development</i>			
<i>Total Central Administration -- Personnel Costs:</i>			
<b>Central Administration -- Facilities:</b>			
<i>Rental of office space (central offices and 4 classrooms)</i>			
<i>Office furniture</i>			
<i>Utilities (electricity, water, heat)</i>			
<i>Telephone (local &amp; long-distance)</i>			
<i>Maintenance and janitorial</i>			
<i>Total Central Administration Facilities Costs:</i>			
<b>Central Administration -- Equipment:</b>			
<i>Copier leasing</i>			
<i>Computer, printers, networking</i>			
<i>Training equipment, projectors, etc.</i>			
<i>Vans (4 for student transportation)</i>			
<i>Total Central Administration Equipment Costs:</i>			
<b>Central Administration -- Marketing and Promotions:</b>			
<i>Media plan (brochures, newspaper ads, etc.)</i>			

<i>Yearly meeting</i>			
<i>Annual report</i>			
<i>Build and maintain mailing list</i>			
<i>Web page development and maintenance</i>			
<i>Total Central Admin. Marketing &amp; Promotions Costs:</i>			
<b>Other Expenses:</b>			
<i>General office supplies</i>			
<i>Liability insurance</i>			
<i>Subscriptions, books, etc.</i>			
<i>Total Central Admin. Other Expenses/Costs:</i>			
<b>Training Program -- Personnel:</b>			
<i>Program director (include yearly salary + 40% for benefits, etc.)</i>			
<i>Program administrator (include yearly salary + 40% for benefits, etc.)</i>			
<i>Consultant: curriculum design (3 months full-time; 9 months 2 hours per day)</i>			
<i>Consultants: teachers (4 full time and 4 half time)</i>			
<i>Consultants: psychologist/counselor (1 full time)</i>			
<i>Van drivers (4 hours per day)</i>			
<i>Total Training Program Personnel Costs:</i>			
<b>Training Program -- Materials:</b>			
<i>GED testing packets (600)</i>			
<i>Grading services from Dept of Human Services (600 students)</i>			
<i>600 self-study guides</i>			
<i>Support group facilitator guides</i>			
<i>Total Training Program Materials Costs:</i>			
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>			
<b>TOTAL SURPLUS (OR DEFICIT)</b> <i>(= revenue minus expenses)</i>			



<i>Total Central Administration Facilities Costs:</i>			
<b><i>Central Administration -- Equipment:</i></b>			
<i>Total Central Administration Equipment Costs:</i>			
<b><i>Central Administration -- Marketing and Promotions:</i></b>			
<i>Total Central Admin. Marketing &amp; Promotions Costs:</i>			
<b><i>Other Expenses:</i></b>			
<i>Total Central Admin. Other Expenses/Costs:</i>			
<b><i>Program -- Personnel:</i></b>			

<i>Total Program Personnel Costs:</i>			
<b><i>Program -- Other Expenses:</i></b>			
<i>Total Program Other Expenses/Costs:</i>			
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>			
<b>TOTAL SURPLUS (OR DEFICIT)</b> <i>(= revenue minus expenses)</i>			

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**Appendix G - Financial Reports (Budgets, Statements, Etc.)**

*This appendix might include, for example,*

- *last fiscal year's budget (planned amounts and actual amounts spent)*
- *current budget report*
- *current Statement of Financial Position*
- *current Statement of Financial Activities*
- *etc.*

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**Appendix H - Monitoring and Evaluation of Plan Responsibilities and Frequencies for Monitoring and Evaluation**

Plan section, goals, etc.	Completion date	Responsibility	Written description of results to:


**Key Questions While Monitoring Implementation of the Plan**

*(The following questions should be modified to suit the nature and needs of the organization.)*

Monitoring and evaluation activities will consider the following questions:

1. Are goals and objectives being achieved or not? If they are, then acknowledge, reward and communicate the progress. If not, then consider the following questions.
2. Will the goals be achieved according to the timelines specified in the plan? If not, then why?
3. Should the deadlines for completion be changed (be careful about making these changes -- know why efforts are behind schedule before times are changed)?
4. Do personnel have adequate resources (money, equipment, facilities, training, etc.) to achieve the goals?
5. Are the goals and objectives still realistic?
6. Should priorities be changed to put more focus on achieving the goals?
7. Should the goals be changed (be careful about making these changes -- know why efforts are not achieving the goals before changing the goals)?
8. What can be learned from our monitoring and evaluation in order to improve future planning activities and also to improve future monitoring and evaluation efforts?

Additional questions:

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***Reporting Status of Implementation***

Results of monitoring and evaluation will be in writing, and will include:

1. Answers to the "Key Questions While Monitoring Implementation of the Plan"
2. Trends regarding the progress (or lack thereof) toward goals, including which goals and objectives
3. Recommendations about the status
4. Any actions needed by management

***Procedure for Changing the Plan***

Regarding any changes to the plan, write down answers to the questions:

1. What is causing changes to be made?
2. Why the changes should be made (the "why" is often different than "what is causing" the changes).
3. What specific changes should be made, including to goals, objectives, responsibilities and timelines?

Reminders:

Manage the various versions of the plan (including by putting a new date on each new version of the plan).

Always keep old copies of the plan.

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**Appendix I - Communicating the Plan**

*Note that certain groups of stakeholders might get complete copies of the plan, including appendices, while other groups (usually outside of the organization) might receive only the body of the plan without its appendices.*

*Consider:*

1. *Every board member and member of management should get a copy of the plan.*
2. *Consider distributing all (or highlights from) the plan to everyone in the organization. It's amazing how even the newest staff member gains quick context, appreciation, and meaning from review of the strategic plan.*
3. *Post your mission and vision and values statements on the walls of your main offices. Consider giving each employee a card with the statements (or highlights from them) on*

*the card.*

- 4. Publish portions of your plan in your regular newsletter, and advertising and marketing materials (brochures, ads, etc.).*
- 5. Train board members and employees on portions of the plan during orientations.*
- 6. Include portions of the plan in policies and procedures, including the employee manual.*
- 7. Consider copies of the plan for major stakeholders, for example, funders/investors, trade associations, potential collaborators, vendors/suppliers, etc.*

*(For additional assistance, see [Writing and Communicating the Plan.](#))*

This plan will be widely communicated including through use of the following approaches:

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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10. \_\_\_\_\_  
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