

# Chapter 10: Strategic Planning

---

**Vision:** *The statewide system has a strategy to sustain and/or expand HFA/home visiting in the state.*

## **I. Introduction**

Solid strategic plans are the core of successful state systems. The planning process guides organizations, identifies programmatic goals and charts a course for accomplishing these goals—combining vision and action in a holistic understanding of the state system’s past, present, and future.

### ***What is strategic planning?***

**Strategic Planning is the process of determining the mission and goals of an organization or group and then outlining both the methods and means by which those goals will be accomplished over a specific period of time such as three or five years.**

In developing a strategic plan for a state system, one must determine what the state system hopes to accomplish and how the system will utilize its resources to accomplish its goals. In developing a strategic plan, one should consider:

- The mission, goals or vision of the system
- The target population to be served
- The system’s role in the state
- All necessary resources--including people, funding, collaborations, and facilities; and
- The best strategies for accomplishing the goals.

Most strategic plans include the following sections:

- An executive summary
- The mission and/or vision statement(s), values, or guiding principles of the state system
- A short history of the state system
- An organizational profile of all parties involved
- A situational analysis such as a SWOT analysis (see resource section)
- A listing of goals and strategies or objectives
- Outcomes designed to indicate the success of strategies in meeting goals
- A work plan detailing the division of labor and time frames
- Staffing levels necessary to fulfill the work plan and
- Budget documents incorporating financial and strategic planning

### ***What are the benefits of strategic planning?***

While the process of strategic planning may be difficult at times, the benefits of both the finished product and the process itself far outweigh the challenges. Some benefits of statewide strategic planning include:

- Enhancing programmatic outcomes.
- Facilitating thinking towards the future and helping to build commitment to agreed-upon goals.
- Providing focus on the most critical issues, choices and opportunities and facilitating problem solving.
- Providing an opportunity to foster collaborations with colleagues both internal and external to Healthy Families America and
- Developing an effective communications and marketing tool via the completed strategic plan.

## **II. Guidelines for Strategic Planning**

**1. Create a statewide home visiting planning group, advisory committee or task force.** Because Healthy Families America is a multi-faceted program, collaboration with a variety of resources in a state or community is highly recommended. Before embarking on a strategic planning process, it is important to invite representatives from a wide range of perspectives to participate in (or at least provide support for) the process and serve on the planning task force.

Many states have developed task forces at the state and local levels to direct their planning efforts. These groups are often divided into sub-committees who are assigned specific responsibilities with regards to the development of the strategic plan. Determining the representation of a variety of interested organizations on the task force should be a priority (i.e. advocacy groups, program staff, evaluators, etc.). It is also important to decide how the various organizations will work together and how decisions will be made. Once the planning committee is formed, the strategic planning process can begin. The process involves the following steps:

**A. Getting Organized:** Articulate the reasons for strategic planning and voice any concerns with the process; select a steering group or person to keep the planning on track; determine if outside help is necessary; outline the planning process that best fits the task force; and get commitment to proceed.

**B. Taking Stock (Situation Analysis):**

First, pull together necessary background information and review the past, present and future status of the task force by compiling the mission statements, challenges, and resources of group members and the joint accomplishments and goals for the entire group. Next identify key issues and future goals. Assess the state system's development to ensure that the system is responding to needs, challenges, and opportunities. Finally, after securing baseline data, decide what types of consistent data and information will be used to assess resources and analyze outcomes.

**C. Setting Direction:** Develop a vision of the Healthy Families America initiative's future, determine how to move the committee and larger task force toward this future vision and develop a first draft of the plan. The following approaches can be helpful in setting direction:

- Critical Issues Approach -- What are the initiative's critical issues and how might they be resolved?
- Scenario Approach -- Identify several scenarios of what the initiative or system might look like, evaluate each scenario and determine how to turn that scenario into reality.
- Goals Approach -- Set strategic goals, develop a plan to achieve these goals and incorporate these strategies into the overall plan.
- Alignment Approach -- Determine what the mission, strategies and needed resources are and how to align them to reach stated goals.

**D. Refining and Adopting the Plan.** Review and refine the plan and approve the final document according to the previously defined decision making process, which can include a larger audience of reviewers.

**E. Implementing the Plan.** It is essential that the plan be implemented so that it becomes real for the state systems and program sites. No strategic plan is useful sitting in a bookshelf. After implementation, be sure to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments and periodic updates.

**2. Provide leadership in engaging sites in developing a written statewide strategic plan for sustaining and expanding HFA/home visiting in the state.** States that have completed the strategic planning process recommend: soliciting program-level input on various working drafts; inviting staff to join committees and special initiatives to help shape the process thereby providing the state system with much-valued site input and promoting local support of state-wide goals.

**3. Disseminate the final plan to all sites.** It is critical that Healthy Families America sites in the state have buy-in and an understanding of their role in the larger statewide plan. Educate site staff, emphasize the importance and benefits of the strategic plan and clearly define the role of the sites in the plan's execution, evaluation, and continued development.

**4. Periodically review and update strategic plan.** A strategic plan should be a fluid document that responds to changing political and financial contexts. As a result, periodic changes may be necessary. Once an overall plan is in place, only certain aspects such as action items need be updated annually. Action items can include advocacy priorities, objectives, budgets, and time lines. Data should be collected consistently and used to evaluate progress made toward achieving goals outlined in the plan.

**5. Ensure there is a fiscally responsible plan for allocating funds once they are secured.** A solid fiscal plan is crucial for attaining programmatic goals. Planning encourages organizations to prioritize core expenditures, establish fiscal management

systems that allow for the most efficient and effective use of resources, and plan for future challenges and gains. Fiscal and strategic planning should be fused throughout the planning and implementation process in order to ensure that current and projected financial resources are sufficient for all stated goals.

### **III. Examples from the states**

The 2002 state systems survey revealed that in Fiscal Year 2002, twenty-two states had begun or completed the strategic planning process. Survey analysis also revealed that many states with a comprehensive statewide system made developing a strategic plan an important step in implementing a statewide system.

#### ***Healthy Families Indiana (HFI)***

In 1993, Indiana introduced Healthy Families Indiana (HFI) by organizing a Think Tank of statewide professionals and state agency leaders. The Think Tank designed a plan to initiate the home visiting model and pilot HFI sites. There was an open process for joining the Think Tank, which grew to 300 people, including providers, state employees, and private organizations—eventually out-growing the state facility where they originally convened. The Think Tank was then reorganized to include an advisory group and several work groups that cluster around training, evaluation, funding, and public awareness. The work groups offer reviews and recommendations to the Think Tank Advisory Committee, which then submits the plan to the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration for guidance and approval.

Each work group has a consistent chair and co-chair and is open to anyone to join at any time. News, minutes, and requests for input are posted on the HFI website that is available only to program sites. Sometimes, certain individuals are specifically encouraged to join in order to increase representation by geographic region and expertise.

Indiana credits the success of their strategic planning process and its implementation to the amount of buy-in from grassroots stakeholders. Many stakeholders across the state appreciate being part of the system. Supporting the process is made relatively easy due to federal funds that support the establishment of mission statements and goals, and a grant from a criminal justice institute that pays for space and equipment for meetings. The strategic plan is reviewed and updated every year and although goals have not changed since 1998, objectives have shifted as the state has moved further along in its main strategies.

#### ***Healthy Families New York***

The Healthy Families New York (HFNY) Home Visiting Council grew out of a day-long forum in March, 1999, that was attended by service providers and advocacy colleagues from across the state, as well as representatives from state agencies that serve children. A self-selected group from the forum convened as the HFNY Home Visiting Council in June 1999 to develop and implement a strategic plan to establish home visiting services in every community in New York. The Council is co-chaired by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services and Prevent Child Abuse New York (a chapter of PCA America) and is comprised of representatives from over 40 public and private organizations throughout the state.

HFNY's strategic plan is presented in three broad categories: program expansion/partnerships, program development/quality assurance and public education/community development. Council members are committed to continued implementation and monitoring of this plan as they chart a course to achieve its goals. They have welcomed public input as they have proceeded. The plan was updated in 2001 and posted online with new goals regarding partnership and advocacy that reflected changing political realities and the interests of the council.

There are three key observations regarding the strategic planning process in New York:

- a. The importance of having an outside facilitator for council discussions. The facilitator was affiliated with state government, was familiar with the program, and helped make planning sessions especially productive and efficient.
- b. Identifying three areas and breaking planning into groups was very helpful, allowing for an efficient and focused division of labor.
- c. Carrying the plan forward really depends on having resources. Volunteer efforts are not enough in and of themselves. The quality assurance and program evaluation pieces were accomplished by being integrated into the sites and state system, while action on the public education and advocacy goals was slower, but was aggressively undertaken once targeted grant funds were secured. The combination of stakeholder commitment and targeted resources has been instrumental in achieving statewide strategic goals.

#### **IV. Strategic Planning Resources**

-Healthy Families New York Strategic Plan <http://pca-ny.org/hfny/council/index.shtml>

-Indiana Strategic Plan: <http://www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org/ssdq/> or Appendix B.

**SWOT: Strategic Planning Process Worksheet**, National Network for Health, <http://www.nnh.org/tobacco/appe-5-2.htm>

**Strategic Planning** (in nonprofit or for-profit organizations) by Carter McNamara: [http://www.mapnp.org/library/plan\\_dec/str\\_plan/str\\_plan.htm](http://www.mapnp.org/library/plan_dec/str_plan/str_plan.htm)

**Creating and Implementing Your Strategic Plan: A Workbook for Public and Nonprofit Organizations.** Bryson, John M., and Farnum K. Alston, San Francisco, 1995.

Support Centers of America have a website with helpful information and resources for nonprofit organizations. They have a guide called *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations, A Practical Guide & Workbook* which can be ordered from their website at: [www.supportcenter.org/sf/spgenie.html](http://www.supportcenter.org/sf/spgenie.html)

**[Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations: A Practical Guide and Workbook](#)** by Michael Allison, et al (Paperback)

[Managing the Non-Profit Organization: Principles and Practices](#) by Peter F. Drucker, et al (Paperback)

Bryson, John M. ***Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement.*** 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1995) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Epsy, Siri N. ***Handbook of Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations.*** (1986) New York: Praeger.

Safford, Dan, and PS Associates. ***Strategic Planning Manual.*** (1994) Seattle: United Way of King Country.

Szabat, Kathryn, and Karen Simmons. ***What Nonprofits and Grantmakers Think about Strategic Planning.*** (1995) Philadelphia: LaSalle University.