



CREATING YOUR NGO'S STRATEGIC PLAN

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Civic Leadership

Video Transcript

[YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS INITIATIVE
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[CIVIC LEADERSHIP
CREATING YOUR NGO'S STRATEGIC PLAN]

[TEXT: Hilary Binder-Aviles, Independent NGO Consultant]

[TEXT: LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Understand what strategic planning and a "strategic plan" is.
2. Become familiar with different ways to carry out strategic planning.
3. Learn the benefits and challenges of strategic planning.]

In this lesson, you'll understand what strategic planning and a strategic plan is, become familiar with different ways to carry out strategic planning, and learn some of the benefits and challenges of strategic planning.

People start NGOs when they have an idea about how to solve a problem they see in their community. Let's say you start an NGO with a mission of expanding opportunities for girls to further their education. You might start with a program that provides mentoring to girls at one school and another project that reaches out to parents. Soon, more schools want you to set up mentoring programs, and the girls and their parents want different kinds of training programs. Before you know it, your NGO is trying to be everything to everyone. This is why you need a strategic plan.

A strategic plan starts with a clear statement of the NGO's purpose – your mission. It should also include a vision statement that describes how you see the NGO in the future. For example: "Do we see ourselves with many programs in many different schools? Or do we see ourselves staying focused on a few schools and offering them more? Do we see ourselves creating our own center?"

With this overall vision, a strategic plan then presents your goals – the specific things you want to accomplish in the next three to five years to carry out the mission. It should include goals for your programs, such as "expand our mentoring program to reach girls in three new schools" – as well as goals for your organizational capacity, such as "strengthen our financial management system," "expand our volunteer recruitment and training," or "increase our fundraising to support new projects."



Now, how can your NGO develop a strategic plan?

NGOs carry out strategic planning in many different ways. The simplest way is to bring together the NGO's board members, staff and volunteers for a one-day meeting to reflect on where you are now and where you want to be in the future.

Try using a "SWOT" analysis. Ask yourselves:

"What do we do best?" That's the "S" – your strengths.

"What do we need to do better?" That's the "W" – your weaknesses.

"Where might we have opportunities to grow or enhance our work?" That's the "O."

"And what are the possible threats to our sustainability?" That's the "T."

In the future, when you're ready to update your plan or develop a new one, you can involve other stakeholders – such as members of the community you serve, partner organizations, even your donors – in providing input on these questions. You can do this by using surveys, or interviews, or holding a community meeting.

Now what are some of the challenges you might face in strategic planning? You might lack the technical know-how – how to prepare a good plan. Ask another NGO with experience for some guidance.

You might think: "We don't have time for all these meetings when we have people who need our help and deadlines to meet." But you'll find that by making the time for people to share their views about the NGO and to come to agreement on its future direction, you'll build greater clarity and unity around where you're going and how you'll get there.

Remember, a strategic plan serves as a road map – keeping your NGO focused on its mission and priorities. Make sure all staff and volunteers understand the plan and organize their work around it.

Before you decide to take on a new project or a new partnership, check with the plan and see if it fits. Involve the Board of Directors in reviewing the plan once a year to assess progress. Send the final plan to your donors and partners, present it at a community meeting, put it on your website if you have one. By sharing your plan with these stakeholders, you inform them about the important work you do, and you build their trust and their confidence.





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