

Building Community Capacity through Strategic Planning

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for Rural Development

Funded by
North Central Regional Center for Rural Development
Small Grants Program

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Focus Group Discussion Topics

- Marketing strategic planning facilitation skills
 - What types of strategic planning efforts have you been engaged with?
 - What are your planning steps before the strategic planning process?
 - Are there differences when facilitating the process with organizations vs community planning?
 - How do you market your strategic planning facilitation skills?
 - How do others contact you to conduct strategic planning?
- Developing and improving facilitation skills
 - How did you develop your strategic planning facilitation skills?
 - How do you prefer to access info for additional skill development?

Focus Group Discussion Topics

- Resources used for strategic planning – scholarly references and guides
 - What are the resources you most frequently use when preparing for or facilitating strategic planning?
 - Have you adapted or developed your own resources?
- Challenges and evaluating impact
 - What have been the biggest challenges with strategic planning?
 - How do you evaluate and measure impact and success?
 - Do you conduct follow-up with groups? If so, describe.



Focus Group Summary

Focus group summary

Topic 1: Marketing strategic planning facilitation skills

- Word of mouth is the most common method for marketing Extension programs – especially through educators with established relationships at the county or unit levels
- Overall, participants expressed the desire to improve and expand Extension's strategic planning programming efforts



Focus group summary

Topic 2: Developing and improving facilitation skills

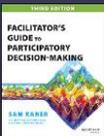
- Participants reported a variety of ways that they had learned the skills needed to facilitate strategic planning
 - Observation
 - Workshops
 - Personal application or experience
 - By teaching others
- Many participants noted the importance of training, and discussed the dangers associated with "sending someone out fresh" or inexperienced



Focus group summary

Topic 3: Resources used for strategic planning

- Participants find resources through recommendations from colleagues, at workshops or in books.



*Kaner, Sam (2014),
Facilitator's Guide to
Participatory Decision-Making*

*Bryson, John M. (2004),
Strategic Planning for Public
and Nonprofit Organizations:
A guide to strengthening and
sustaining organizational
achievement*



Focus group summary

Topic 4: Challenges and evaluating impact

Inherent
immeasurability of
intangible outcomes

Insufficient
human
resources
(Educators)
to engage
communities

Lack of
sustained
participation
in group

- Most report that the evaluation process is limited to an assessment of the strategic planning *process*, rather than indicators for outcomes or impacts



Literature Review Summary

Literature review summary

Definitions of "strategic planning" differ from author to author and by context, but most authors agree that the following components are crucial:

- The process emphasizes the **future** and fosters the creation of a **vision**; the future-emphasis is ongoing in the process.
- The planning process must incorporate **internal** considerations and the **external** forces of the environment.
- Effective **communication** is necessary.
- Any number of processes can be used effectively – there is **no one right planning process**.



Survey of Extension Professionals

Survey Summary

- 81 Extension professionals responded
- 49 work primarily in community and economic development



- 76% of respondents indicate that their clientele expect them to be able to facilitate a strategic planning process

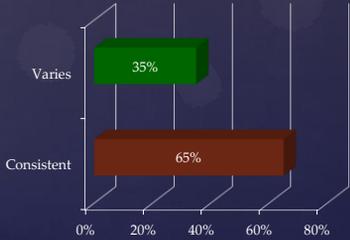
Survey Summary

- Most popular strategic planning paradigms:
 - SWOT/SOAR
 - Asset-based development
 - Appreciative inquiry



Survey Summary

- Question: Do you maintain a consistent framework for strategic planning for each group with which you work?



Survey Summary

- Other key findings:
 - 81% of respondents indicate that strategic planning processes demand a **significant investment of their time**
 - 95% of those believe that investment to be worthwhile
 - Nearly one-fifth of respondents indicate that the **demographics** of those involved in the process are **not reflective of the community**
 - Those underrepresented: racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities; youth; hourly workers; low socioeconomic households
 - 100% of the respondents indicate that the SP process develops **shared ownership** for communities and organizations to achieve identified goals

Key Observations

- The abundant **diversity** of organizational and theoretical approaches among Extension professionals is a **strength**
 - Allowing for flexibility and adaptive methodology
 - Infusing a wealth of experience into the system resources
 - Serving to sustain Extension's ever-growing cadre of professionals experienced in strategic planning facilitation

Recommendations

- A **toolbox of resources** would allow professionals to have access to research-based and tested strategic planning resources
 - Allowing users to employ **multiple strategies for success**
- Web-based materials could also offer opportunities for dialogue to educate and **grow** Extension's **skill** and **knowledge base**
- Educational resources and opportunities for general facilitation skills are also needed

Recommendations

- The toolbox could also serve as a broad, inter-agency collection of executed strategic plans
 - Providing **opportunities for learning and collaboration**
- It is imperative that Extension professionals document and share their successes within their departments and with stakeholders
 - Needed: Better strategies to follow-up and **document outcomes** and impacts
 - Needed: Communication tools to **share impacts** with internal and external stakeholders

Questions?

We appreciate the funding provided for this study from the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Small Grants Program

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