

Volunteering in the 21st Century



Forward Planning

For any community organisation looking to the future is crucial to its ongoing viability. Having a plan seems like common sense, and yet sometimes groups get so engaged in simply doing what we think needs to be done that we forget to provide for the future of the organisation.

Forward Planning can be viewed a little like extending a house, and you wouldn't start that without a plan!

Setting goals can be as simple as stating what it is you wish to achieve and then filling in the steps of how to reach that, or it can be a multi-layered strategic plan, which looks at the different functions and activities of the organisation over several years.

Developing policies enables the Committee to acknowledge discussions and decisions that have been made in the past regarding certain important aspects of its functions, so you aren't making the same decisions over and over which can be quite tedious and distract from the key focus of achieving meaningful outcomes.

Setting goals and strategic planning

Planning is there for one purpose: to help your organisation do its work well!

There are so many choices and so many demands on our organisations, and so few resources. Planning can make sure that your organisation can find its way through these demands and develop:

- shared knowledge about what you are providing the community
- understanding of what the community members want
- knowledge that it is being viable and successful
- the people, energy and finances to do what it wants

We can look at goals and planning in a short-term and/or in a long-term framework. Short term may be in relation to a time-limited project (e.g. planning the annual major fundraiser) or for an organisation's Business Plan (over one financial year). Long-term planning usually relates to anywhere from two to five years and is often referred to as a Strategic Plan.

Whether looking at short or long term goals, these Goal Setting Tips should help your planning:

- Take the time to plan properly. Don't rush it, get it right
- Be inclusive, make sure everyone concerned is involved and on the same page
- Be realistic about what you can achieve with what you have
- Make sure the goal will be of benefit to, and meet the vision of, the organization
- Write your plans down, making sure you have a timeline and deadlines

- Provide time and space for feedback on how the plan is going
- When you have completed the plan, celebrate!

SMART goals are:

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Timely

Strategic Planning provides a way for an organisation to be accountable and transparent about what it wants to achieve and how it will achieve it. In new organisations it provides a way to develop shared understanding of its purpose, and in more established organisations it provides a way to make sure that the purpose is still relevant, effective and understood by current members.

Doing a SWOT analysis (looking at the organisation's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) is a good way to begin a process of strategic planning. This allows the organisation to start thinking strategically about itself in order to plan for future actions it may need to take.

What follows is a map to guide the development of strategic goals for your organisation. It will assist in the process of focussing your organisation's vision and priorities in response to constant change.

Map Guide for Strategic Goal Setting

Vision: How we would we like the world to be

Principles: Guiding value statements to inform our practice

Aims: What we aim to do

Objectives: The 'how' of achieving our aims - a set for each aim

Strategies: The details of how objectives will be achieved

Plan development example:

The Buloke Knitting Club

The vision

Developing a shared understanding of what your group is going to achieve begins with the organisational Vision, or the 'big picture'.

Example: To come together in a pleasant atmosphere to share skills, learn new ones and to reach out to others about knitting.

The principles

Value statements or sentences that really flesh out what the vision means in reality, describing what the organisation believes about what it is doing. Developing about ten of these will fill out the Vision and provide for greater ease in sharing knowledge and understanding of why and for what the organisation exists.

Example: Knitting is a necessary skill to exchange in this time of change; or, Knitting with others provides a safe, comfortable and supportive environment for community building.

The aims

What the organisation wants to achieve. Having one Aim for each of the areas mentioned will give a good coverage of the different levels of activity for the organisation.

Example: What Service does the organisation provide to the community? 'To provide teaching and learning opportunities for knitting within the Shire'

What Community Development aims, or broader community effects, does the organisation have? 'To rebuild knitting as a useful and versatile skill within the broader community'

Define the process your organisation will use, or the how you will work together to achieve your Vision and Aims. 'To work in a collaborative manner'.

The objectives

Outline the steps to fulfill the Aims.

Example: Using the Aim above 'To provide teaching and learning opportunities for knitting within the Shire', the Objectives could be: having regular meeting times; developing a teaching program suitable for schools; advertising through local media; visiting Ashleigh House through a skill-sharing program; having plenty of knitting exhibits at the Agricultural Shows, etc.

The strategies

A detailed plan of how, who, by when, and the evaluation of actually achieving the Objectives.

Example: Using the example Objective above 'Visiting Ashleigh House through a skill-sharing program'.

How? Speak with Ashleigh House Recreation Officer about idea; develop list of resources needed including budget; set a weekly time to visit.

Who? Committee members Lorraine Ryan and Frances Murphy.

When? Before March 2015.

Evaluation? – Lorraine and Frances to report to committee on how the program is coming along by August 2014, then once the program commences and as required by committee; finally, the program success will be reviewed May 2016.

