

# Why Your Strategic Plan Isn't Working (And What to Do About It)

Across the sector, mission-driven organizations stumble on the same roadblock: a strategic plan that's either missing, forgotten on a shelf, or never quite translates into day-to-day decisions. The result? Reactive scrambling instead of proactive impact.

But we can fix that gap.

We bring battle-tested, community-rooted tools that turn lofty vision into a living roadmap—one written with the voices that matter (staff, board, partners, residents) and built to survive real-world constraints.





# Help! Our Plan Isn't Working!

*Sound familiar?*

A non-profit engaged a nationally known firm to analyze, assess and develop a strategic plan for the next 5 years.

The process engaged only the C-Suite level staff, had a multitude of subcommittees that didn't have a structure to develop alignment and coherence, and created so many complex pathways, assessments, indicators and strategies that many couldn't see themselves in the plan. This led to a plan that the staff and stakeholders didn't feel connected to, and therefore very few actually utilized the resulting 40-page document.



# Why Do We Need a Plan Anyway?

Having a quality and effective strategic plan is not unrealistic! It can help you to:

- Gain focus, clarity and alignment around a set of goals and a pathway to accomplish them – across staff, board members and partners.
- Understand what is working and what is not serving us, in order to refine our activities and resources.
- Have a roadmap and logic model that we can share with our board and donors to help raise money.

And more!

# Quick Diagnostic

- We have a written strategic plan.
- Our team refers to the plan regularly.
- Staff and board were meaningfully involved in shaping it.
- We use the plan to guide decisions, priorities, and resource allocations.
- There are clear metrics or benchmarks attached to each goal.
- We review progress at least quarterly.
- It's easy to understand and connects directly to our day-to-day work.
- Our partners and community can see themselves in the plan.
- We've adapted the plan at least once based on shifting realities.





# Common Pitfalls

There are several common pitfalls that can lead to a plan not having the impact you are aiming for - what applies to you?

- We created the plan with limited input from frontline staff, clients, or community.
- Our plan is mostly a list of goals without clear timelines or responsibilities.
- No one “owns” the plan or ensures it’s followed.
- We got stuck trying to be too comprehensive or perfect.
- We haven’t looked at the plan since the board approved it.
- Staff don’t see how their roles connect to the goals.
- We avoid naming trade-offs, so everything is a priority.
- We never revisit or update the plan as things shift.

# Tips to Get Your Plan In Action

## *Name Your “North Star.”*

Make sure everyone can articulate the long-term change you're working toward—and why it matters. Keep it short, bold, and community-rooted.

## *Assign Clear Ownership.*

Every strategy should have at least one person accountable for moving it forward—with the authority and support to do so.

## *Build in Check-Ins.*

Set lightweight monthly or quarterly strategy reviews (15–30 minutes!) to revisit goals, name blockers, and course correct.

## *Make it Visual + Shareable.*

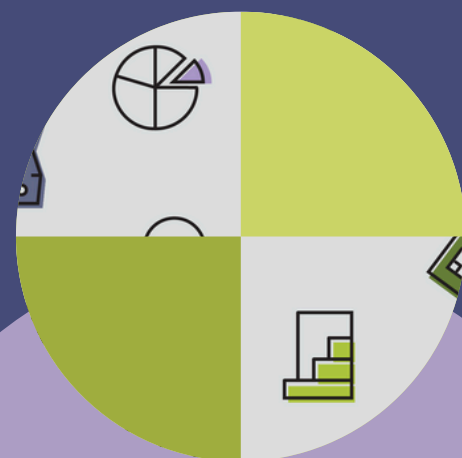
Turn your strategy into a one-pager or dashboard that's accessible—something staff can see, not just store.

## *Involve Your People.*

Regularly bring in staff, clients, and community to reflect on what's working, what's not, and what's needed next.



# Refreshing Your Plan: Key Questions



- **What have we accomplished** in the current plan? What is still relevant, and what is not?
- **What has changed** since we created our plan that we need to consider?
- What are some **themes and feedback we've noted** from data and/or stakeholder input?
- What are some **specific impacts** we want to have in the community?
- What needs to be true within our organization and the work we do in the community **to realize our Mission and Vision**?
- **What is the most impactful thing you can do to contribute to right now?** What does the organization need to do to make this contribution?
- What are **2-3 things that are fundamental to the future success** of our organization as a whole?

# Action Plan

- What's one thing we can do this month to reconnect with our strategy?
- Who can champion that step?
- What support or permission do they need?



# DIY Strategic Planning for Nonprofits



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