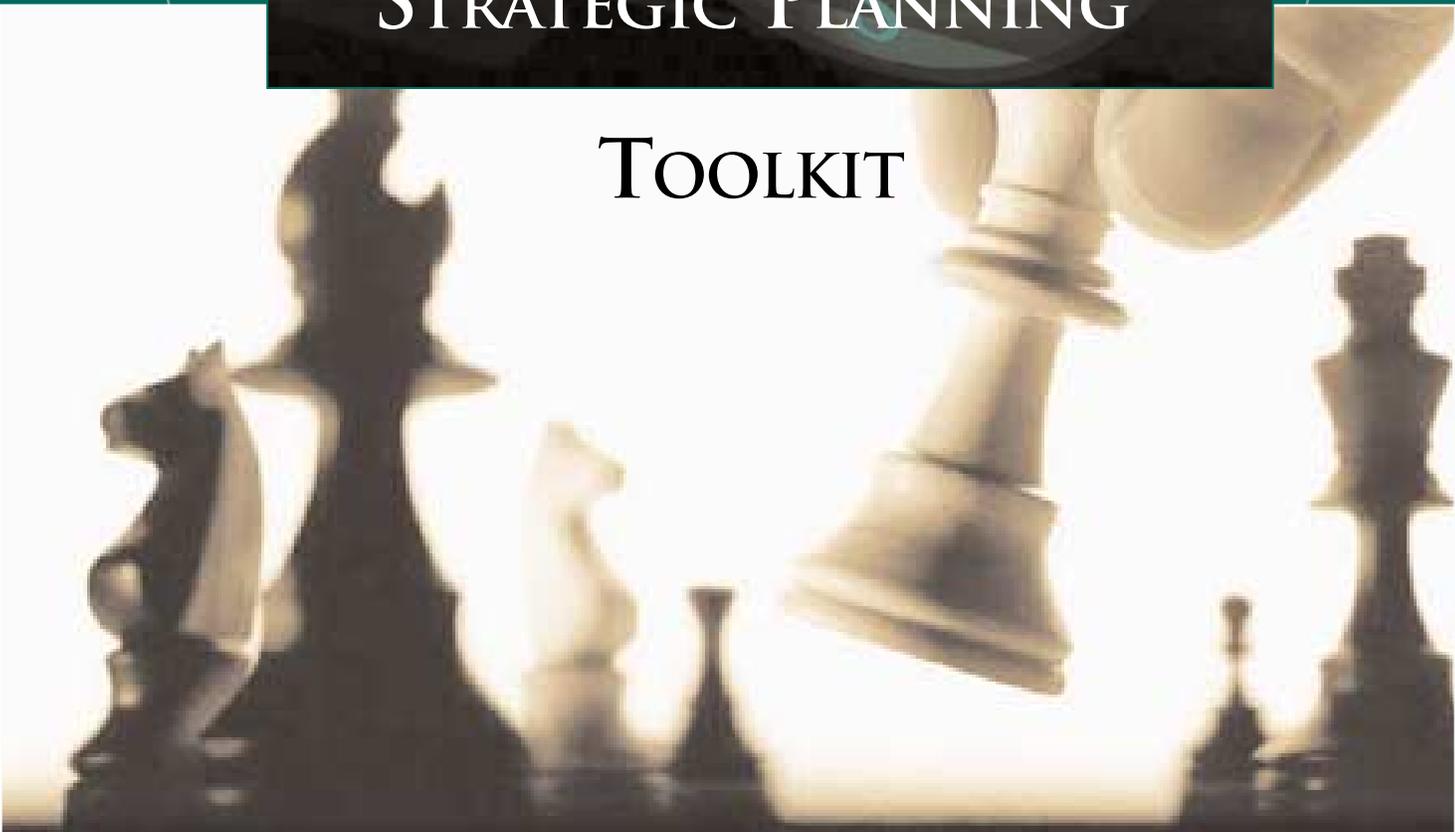




STRATEGIC PLANNING

TOOLKIT



An Office for Victims
of Crime Publication



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Project Team would like to acknowledge several individuals and organizations for their significant contributions to the Strategic Planning Toolkit.

Special recognition is given to Carol Watkins, former Director of the OVC State Compensation and Assistance Division, for identifying the need for strategic planning by VOCA agencies. Special thanks is also extended to Christine Brooks Cropper of the Justice Grants Administration (JGA) Program within the Office of the Mayor of the District of Columbia. Prior to her work at JGA, Ms. Brooks Cropper began this Project while at the OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center, and helped develop and coordinate the initial Project strategy.

We are grateful to the Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting (OSPB) within the Office of the Governor of Arizona. The Arizona OSPB granted permission for the Project Team to use many valuable resources from its *1998 Managing for Results Handbook*. The groundwork provided by the OSPB, which was adapted specifically for the victim assistance field for this Toolkit, is a significant contribution to the overall value of this Toolkit.

The Project Team would also like to thank the crime victims, service providers, and allied professionals in Colorado, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Vermont, whose participation in their own States' strategic planning processes are documented in "case studies" included in the Appendices of this Toolkit. The lessons learned from their experiences are highly instructive to other states and organizations that seek to develop strategic plans in order to improve victim services.

Dr. Mario Gaboury deserves a special mention and gratitude for providing editing for a draft of the Toolkit. The Project Team would also like to thank Kleimann Communication Group and Ampersand Graphic Design for providing the final editing of the Toolkit and assembling its contents in the manner in which they are presented.

Finally, the guidance provided by Emily C. Martin, OVC's Director of Technical Assistance, Publications, and Information Resources; Paula E.F. Younger, OVC TTAC project director; as well as Stanley L. Pryor and Gayle O'Donnell from the OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center, contributed significantly to the planning and development of this Toolkit.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

What is strategic planning?.....	1
Why should you create a strategic plan?.....	1
What is an overview of the strategic planning process?.....	4
Who should use this Toolkit?	4
How should you use this toolkit?	5
How should you navigate through this Toolkit?.....	6

Section 1. Prepare: Getting your organization ready for strategic planning

Step 1. Developing a strategic planning group	1-2
Step 2. Finding out if your organization is ready for a strategic plan.....	1-4
Step 3. Establishing common ground for strategic planning	1-10

Section 1. Tools

Stakeholders Analysis Checklist	T1-2
Client Analysis Checklist	T1-4
Preplanning Readiness Checklist.....	T1-6
Head Start's Eight Multicultural Principles Checklist	T1-7

Section 2. Assess: Determine where your organization is now

Step 1. Using structured methods to assess your organization	2-2
Step 2. Collecting and consolidating data about your organization	2-6

Section 2.Tools

Organizational Assessment Checklist	T2-2
Conducting a SWOT Analysis	T2-4
Collecting archival data	T2-13
Collecting new data.....	T2-19
Consolidating your data	T2-36

Section 3. Create: Determine where you want your organization to go

Step 1: Developing guiding statements.....	3-2
Step 2: Developing strategic goals and objectives.....	3-5
Step 3: Setting priorities.....	3-10
Step 4: Writing your strategic plan	3-11

Section 3. Tools

Developing a Values Statement.....	T3-2
Developing a Vision Statement	T3-4
Developing a Mission Statement.....	T3-6
Developing Clear Goals Checklist	T3-8
Developing Clear Objectives Checklist	T3-10
Priority Table	T3-12



Section 4. Implement: Putting the plan into action

Step 1. Developing an action plan4-2
Step 2. Addressing the resources you need to support actions.....4-8
Step 3. Obtaining funding for your plan.....4-9

Section 4. Tools

Project Logic or the “Method of Rationales”T4-2
Action Plan Development Action Grid.....T4-5
Action Plan Litmus TestT4-7
Resource Action GridT4-8
Federal Grant Funding Sources.....T4-9
Checklist for Proposal WritingT4-10

Section 5. Communicate: Marketing the strategic plan

Step 1. Assessing your stakeholders’ information needs.....5-2
Step 2. Choosing an effective delivery method for communicating your strategic plan5-3
Step 3. Creating a simple communication plan.....5-7

Section 5. Tools

Stakeholders Needs Table.....T5-2
Delivery Method Determination TableT5-4
Delivery Method Determining Grid.....T5-5
Communication Plan Organizing GridT5-6

Section 6. Track: Determining how well the plan is working

Step 1. Deciding why you are conducting an evaluation.....6-3
Step 2. Identifying who will help with the evaluation.....6-5
Step 3. Choosing your evaluation strategy.....6-7
Step 4. Writing your evaluation plan.....6-11
Step 5. Collecting data6-13
Step 6. Reporting results6-17

Section 6. Tools

Self-Evaluation Versus Outside Evaluation Assessment QuestionnaireT6-2
Most Important Issues for Your Evaluation QuestionnaireT6-4
Evaluation Plan Outlining ToolT6-7
Tracking Document ChecklistT6-9
Sample Tracking DocumentT6-9
Sample Monitoring ReportT6-13

Glossary.....G-1

Appendix A. Suggested reading list on strategic planning.....A-1

Appendix B. Suggested Federal grant funding resources.....B-1

Appendix C. Five state strategic planning initiatives: Highlights of the strategic planning process.....C-1

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS STRATEGIC PLANNING?

A strategic plan is simply a tool to help your organization plan for the future. Because it is strategic in scope, it helps you identify where your organization is now and envision where you want it to be in the future. Because it is a plan, it helps you take systematic actions to bridge the “here-and-now” and your vision of the future. Along the way, it allows your organization to identify its strengths and weaknesses, to articulate a shared vision, to establish goals, and to prepare plans to achieve those goals in an effective and efficient manner.²

*Strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future.*¹

So, why should your organization develop a strategic plan? Ultimately, because strategic planning will help you serve victims better. Strategic planning can strengthen your organization now, secure your organization’s future, and improve its performance throughout.³ It is a win-win situation—for your organization and for the people you serve.

WHY SHOULD YOU CREATE A STRATEGIC PLAN?

Organizations that have created strategic plans have seen many benefits result—both in their ultimate plan and the process that they took to create it. Some of the benefits to strategic planning⁴ are:

- **It allows you to plan for change in increasingly complex environments.** Perhaps the one constant in the public and private sectors today is the idea of change. Increasing demands for services, shrinking resources, and greater expectations for services all combine to form a dynamic environment. Strategic planning is proactive; organizations are encouraged to seek and manage change instead of simply reacting to it.
- **It is an essential managerial tool.** Organizations are being asked to achieve and improve outcomes each year. In many cases, getting appropriate funding relies on improved out-

comes. In other words, every organization must now focus on making their operations as efficient and effective as possible. Strategic planning enables organizations to develop a system to institute continuous improvement at *all* levels.

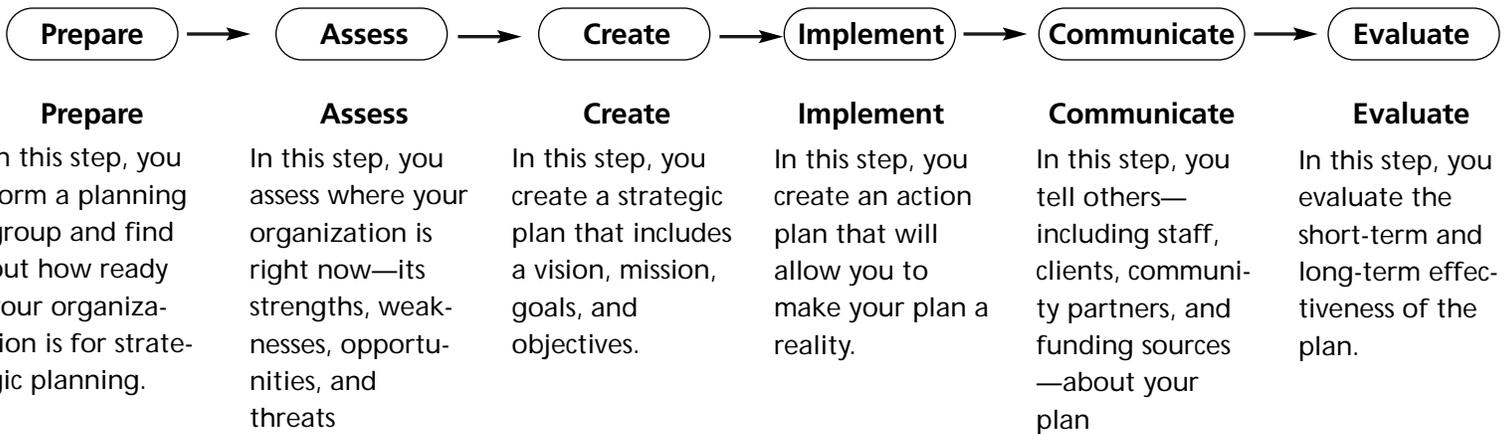
- **It identifies organizational capabilities.** When people think of strategic planning, they tend to think of a solely future-oriented activity. However, strategic planning also helps you focus on the here and now. As you create your plan, you will spend time assessing where your organization is right now. You will gain insight into how your organization actually works, how others perceive it, and what its true strengths and weaknesses are.
- **It focuses your organization on the future.** Strategic planning can also help your organization determine the best direction for its future. It involves a disciplined effort to help shape and guide what your organization becomes, what it does, and why it does it. Strategic planning requires you to gather broad-scale information, explore alternatives, and address the future implications of present decisions.⁵
- **It promotes communication.** Strategic planning brings together many people with a common goal: to plan for an organization's future. It requires difficult discussions as different people will have different visions for the future. Strategic planning facilitates better communication and participation, accommodates divergent interests and values, and fosters orderly decision making.
- **It is adaptable.** Although strategic planning takes a long-range approach, it also uses methods to determine progress and assess the validity of the plan—keeping the planning flexible. A plan can be updated and adjusted to respond to changing circumstances and take advantage of emerging opportunities. It sets targets for performance, incorporates ways to check progress, helps establish priorities, and provides guidance for ongoing operational and capital plans and budgets.
- **It is essential for client support.** Strategic planning determines the things that an organization can do to address client expectations. Service organizations all across the country have come to recognize that they have both clients and stakeholders that they are accountable to. The strategic planning process allows you to better identify your clients and stakeholders and assess their needs and expectations.
- **It is essential for funding support.** Many funding sources *require* or *strongly encourage* strategic planning in order to justify their continued support through grants, contracts and other awards. This applies to both

private-sector and government funding sources. Some private foundations and public funding sources either request or even require strategic plans as part of their grant applications.

- **It is necessary: If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.** State and local victim service organizations face increasing challenges: they must constantly manage complex and changing programs, work on limited resources, and serve increasing numbers of clients with multiple needs. In an environment like this, planning is a necessity.

WHAT IS AN OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS?

Strategic planning requires concentrated effort from a variety of contributors over a period of time. The best way to understand the strategic process is to use a model. The following model shows the steps that your organization will go through as it develops a strategic plan:



WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOLKIT?

This Strategic Planning Toolkit can benefit any victim services organization—at the state or local level—that wants to assess where it wants to go in the future. When we refer to “your organization” throughout the document, that term could mean a government organization or a private one. It could also mean a group of organizations who are planning a joint direction together.

Beginning any new program or instituting change is always a stressful enterprise. Instead of simply jumping in blindly, it is much more prudent to adopt a structure, and a plan. When an organization decides to begin any new program, or even just alter an existing one, a strategic plan can help you ensure that your process is successful.

Strategic planning provides a strict structure designed to walk any organization through the process of researching, designing, implementing, and evaluating a strategic plan. Creating a strategic plan may not *guarantee* success in your new venture, but it greatly enhances your chances of succeeding.

HOW SHOULD YOU USE THIS TOOLKIT?

This Strategic Planning Toolkit is intended to function as a guide for you to use throughout the strategic planning process. The Toolkit offers guidelines you can follow and tools and resources for you to draw on at every step.

The Toolkit is organized to help you both *learn* about the planning process and *use* the process. It is broken into six sections that correspond to the six steps in strategic planning. Each section includes a written description of that part of the process and a separate set of tools and resources. All sections are designed to give you a focused way to start strategic planning in your organization.

The Toolkit contains:

- **Section 1. Prepare:** Getting your organization ready for strategic planning.
- **Section 2. Assess:** Determining where your organization is now.
- **Section 3. Create:** Determining where you want your organization to go.
- **Section 4. Implement:** Putting your plan into action.
- **Section 5. Communicate:** Marketing your Strategic Plan.
- **Section 6. Track:** Determining how well your plan is working.
- **Appendix A:** Suggested reading list on strategic planning.
- **Appendix B:** Suggested Federal grant funding resources.
- **Appendix C:** Five state strategic planning initiatives—Highlights of the strategic planning process.

Additionally, each section is accompanied by a Tools section which includes practical, hands-on activities for you to use in your strategic planning process. There are worksheets, checklists, tables, and sample documents for you to use or alter to suit your strategic planning needs.

HOW DO YOU NAVIGATE THROUGH THIS TOOLKIT?

You will be able to navigate through the six sections of the Toolkit by simply looking at the numbers provided. Each section is broken up into a series of steps, such as Step 1, and Step 2, and again into sub-steps, like 1.1, 1.2.

Each of the six sections in the Toolkit has a tools portion that follows the basic text. The tools portion is organized according the same steps included in the main section. Not every step in a section has a corresponding tool and some steps have more than one tool. For example, in the tools portion of **Section 1, Assess**, there are two tools for Step 1. Developing a strategic planning group. One is a Stakeholders Analysis Checklist and the other is a Client Analysis Checklist.

INTRODUCTION ENDNOTES

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