

STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE

Principles of Strategic Governance

1. Clear *mission*¹, *vision* and *values* statements guide leaders and staff.
2. The *strategic plan* is the driving force for agendas, board discussions and the focus of *successive leaders*.
3. The goals and strategies are translated into a more precise (tactical) *business* or *action plan* by staff.
4. *Performance measures* are the basis for gauging progress.
5. The *chief elected officer* charges *committees* with work from the plan. Committees have access to the board through a director or staff liaison if they are chaired by other than board members. *The board of directors does not do committee work at the board table.*
6. *When non-strategic discussions arise*, a member of the board or staff is empowered to query the relevance of the discussion.
7. *Board members remain responsible to each other* – taking pride in their follow-through and achievements while serving in the leadership role.
8. The *strategic plan* is revisited annually, and updated every three to five years.



¹ Statement of purpose.



Strategic Board – A board that has clear vision and acts accordingly --- based upon the organization’s mission, vision, values, goals and strategies.

Strategic Plan - The document identifying the organization’s direction and goals for 3 to 5 years; serving as a roadmap for successive leaders. Planning participants should be visionary - yet practical - to best position the organization. A plan is reviewed annually and updated in full at periodic leadership retreats.

Mission Statement – The statement of purpose; aligned with bylaws and articles. High marketing value to identify the organization, who it serves and what it offers. Some of the best mission statements fit on the back of a business card as a single, easy to memorize, sentence.

Vision Statement - Identifies the desired future for the organization and the community it serves. For example, “ABC is the primary organization advocating for members; providing the resources and offering the education essential for prosperity.”

Values Statement –Beliefs that guide leadership and staff. Often organized as bulleted phrases or key words to communicate an organization’s standards. For instance: diversity, member-driven, environmental sensitivity, transparency and integrity.

Goals - The broad direction and overarching themes of work set by the board; usually 3 to 7 goals in a plan. (Synonymous with objectives.) Make them **S.M.A.R.T**: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely.

Strategies – The initiatives, projects and ideas, that when carried out, will achieve the stated goals. (Strategies may identify **performance measures**; i.e. a ten percent net growth in membership.)

Business or Action Plan – A more detailed staff/committee document to advance the strategic plan in the coming year. The action plan breaks down the board’s broad goals into an accountable, measurable, timeline of work.

Committees – Committees are a means for the board to delegate work to volunteers. Often the number of committees is aligned with the number of major goals. Committees do not have a “life of their own” but receive explicit charges by the chairman of the board. Committees should have a link to the board for reporting --- via a staff or director *liaison*. Committees seldom have authority of make commitments on behalf of the organization. The resulting creative work of a committee is property of the organization. The board should not conduct nor revisit committee work at the board meeting.

Standing – A permanent committee, authorized by the bylaws, to perform ongoing functions for the organization. Most bylaws allow the board, or board chairman, to appoint committees as needed.

Ad Hoc – Latin for "this purpose." An ad hoc committee is created with a unique and specific assignment or task --- and is disbanded after it has studied and reported on the matter.

Task Force - A task force is a temporary committee formed to work on a single task or activity; synonymous with ad hoc committee.

Agenda – A carefully crafted schedule for board meetings to advance the goals and strategies of the strategic plan. A *strategic board* is empowered to bring sidebar or inappropriate conversations back to the task at hand, as identified on the agenda. Board discussions should be visionary, relevant and stay focused on governance, policy/position development, fiduciary responsibility and the future of the organization and the community it represents.