Issue #10:
The Long View

Part II -
Developing Your Plan

Who develops the plan? There are many possibilities. The Board can develop the entire plan. The Executive Director can do the entire plan. A variety of committees, task forces, and individuals can develop portions of the plan. Affiliates have developed effective long term plans in all these ways. No particular method has clearly been identified as the best, but those that engage the thinking and energy of the board and the staff are to be preferred.

Board members will not be as knowledgeable about the affiliate's finances, programs, staffing and challenges as the staff, but all need to share enthusiasm and ownership of the plan. Therefore, all need to participate in some way in the creation of the plan. Individual participation will vary, but at a minimum everyone should be aware that a plan is being created and have access to the finished document.

Developing the plan has been somewhat humorously described as the completion of the following discussions:

- Why does our group exist?
- What does our group want?
- What can we do to make it happen?
- How can we do it?
- Exactly how do we do it?
- Who will do it?
- When will we do it?
- Let's do it!
- Are we doing it?

How do we really feel about it?
Did we really do it?
So What?
Now what?

Most long range plans will include:

- A statement of mission and purpose
- A statement of the assumptions about the future the plan is based upon
- Major program objectives
- Detailed program descriptions with measurable goals and budgeted expenditures.

Most plan development will therefore include:

- Reaffirmation or redrafting of the mission statement
- Data collection and analysis
- Developing strategic direction
- Developing objectives and programs
- Securing approval and commitment.

Reaffirming the mission

Mission is about what matters. As Vaughn Keller has noted, "Stating a mission is not a literary exercise, it is a search for meaning conducted by a group." For more information about developing a mission statement, see Board Paper #8.

Data Collection and Analysis

As individuals, our knowledge of the organization is incomplete as is our understanding of the external world in which the organization operates. There are several analytic tools and techniques that help assure that we have considered all of the elements we need to consider in our planning. These elements include:

- History of the organization
- Resources of the organization
- Financial assets
- Facilities
- Expertise
- Leadership
- Elements of the environment
- Need for services
- Demographics of our consumers
- Technological advances
- Competitors
- Socio-political forces in our community

In most cases the staff will monitor these data on an on-going basis. The information will be shared with the board in several ways: as part of the Executive Director's report to the board, as part of the work of committees or task forces.

"The plan must be seen as a set of hypotheses. As new information or new values emerge which question the original hypotheses, the organization is challenged to become a "learning" system. The organization has to learn more about its environment, more about the true desires of its members, more about its own strengths and weaknesses. Pushes to deviate from the plan are, in this context, stimuli to the learning system. There is a paradox here. Those who don't plan don't learn about their environments and their organizations. Yet, those who do plan must value deviation from their original vision and treat the deviation as stimulation to greater learning."

Vaughn Keller, The PPFA Strategic Planning Handbook
Planning Survey of Organization Members

1. In what areas would you like to see our affiliate move more rapidly?
   A
   B
   C

2. What do you consider to be our affiliate's primary assets?
   A
   B
   C

3. What frustrates you the most in working with our affiliate?
   A
   B
   C

4. Of our activities, what gives you the greatest sense of personal satisfaction?
   A
   B
   C

5. In order of priority, what issues do you believe we must address this year?
   First
   Second
   Third
   Fourth
forces, as part of regular reports to
the board on financial and service
statistics. In addition, the staff may
prepare a statement for the board
which states the assumptions that
the plan may be based on. For
example, that population in the
affiliate’s turf will grow, that the
number of competitors will decrease,
that offering Norplant insertions
would be well within staff capability.
Everyone involved in the planning
process should be encouraged to ask
for the information he or she needs
to make a valuable contribution. In
order for the board to take owner-
ship of the process, they need access
to the basic data set described above.
Relevant information is critical to
strategic thinking.

At some point in the process,
those responsible for the plan will
have a sense of the opportunities and
threats that exist in the environment
as well as the strengths and weak-
ness of the agency itself. Planners
are now ready to begin developing
strategy.

** Developing Strategic Direction

Using the analytical data that
have been gathered, it is possible to
identify a number of strategic
questions. These might be questions
like: Shall we broaden the range of
our services? How adequately do
our present service sites serve the
needs in the community? Shall we
seek new turf? Shall we develop a
major volunteer program to support
our public affairs activities? Accord-
ing to Mark Salo, Executive Director
of Planned Parenthood of San Diego
and Riverside, “the questions should
come from a review of the
organization’s capacity to act, its
mission, the interviews of its people,
the environment in which it operates
and the opportunities facing it.”
Usually there will be no more than
five or six strategic questions.
Deriving the strategic questions from
the data may be done by the core
leadership of the board and staff, for
example the planning or executive
committee and the senior staff.

These five or six questions then
need to be stated in such a way that
the board can reflect upon them,
discuss them and make appropriate
decisions. This can be done by
writing very brief papers on each,
listing the pros and cons and describ-
ing the possible impacts on the
agency. The board can then discuss
and make decisions on the strategic
questions during the planning
meeting or retreat.

** Developing Objectives and
Programs

Once strategies have been
affirmed by the board, they should
be articulated in a simple, direct and
short paragraph. These strategies
should encompass the board and
staff’s best theory on how the affiliate
should proceed at this point in its
history in this environment. At this
stage the planning process may
return to staff to develop objectives,
programs, staffing needs and budg-
eting. The resulting document is
reviewed again by relevant commit-
tees and by the board as a whole.

** Securing approval and
commitment

If the board has been properly
involved in plan development, the
plan’s approval should follow as a
matter of course. Everyone on the
board should have had access to the
planning process.

When a commitment to planning
is made it should include a commit-
ment to keep the plan alive. Refer to
it often as a reference and to note
affiliate accomplishment of parts of
the plan.

It is good to remember that the
plan is a working document subject
to change. Changes in the plan or in
basic strategies should be noted and
discussed at the Board level.

** A note about communication

We must all accept a fair degree
of uncertainty. Since this is so, it may
seem a waste of time to focus on
planning. Many, however, have
found that the best way to approach
the future is with a sense of direction
and purpose, a commitment to
continuous learning and a high
degree of flexibility.

There are several problems with
the planning process as it exists in
most organizations:

- failure to involve the right people
- failure to address driving assump-
tions
- failure to identify sources of am-
biguity
- failure to integrate strategy.

Many of these problems are
communication problems. Often
boards are not sure of what is really
happening; not sure what problems
face the affiliate; not sure who’s
supposed to do what; not sure how
to get what they want; not sure if
the affiliate is succeeding. If these issues
arise in the planning process, take a
look at how board meetings serve (or
do not serve) to stimulate the strate-
gic thinking skills of members.

"Human beings aren’t the only
ones whose learning is directly
related to their ability to convey
information. As a species, birds
have great potential to learn, but
there are important differences
among them. Titmice, for exam-
ple, move in flocks and mix
freely, while robins live in well-
defined parts of the garden and
for the most part communicate
agonistically across the
borders of their territories.

Virtually all the titmice in the
U.K. quickly learned how to
pierce the seals of milk bottles
left at doorsteps. But robins as
a group will never learn to do this
(though individual birds may)
because their capacity for institu-
tional learning is low; one bird’s
knowledge does not spread. The
same phenomenon occurs in
management teams that work by
mandate. The best learning takes
place in teams that accept that the
whole is larger than the sum of
the parts, that there is a good that
transcends the individual.

Arie P. de Geus, “Planning as Learning"
Trends Affecting Non-profit Organizations

James M. Hardy, author of Managing for Impact in Nonprofit Organizations, has identified a number of trends that will affect nonprofit organizations in the future. As we plan for the future of our affiliates, it’s probably a good idea to be aware of the environment in which nonprofit organizations will operate. Mr. Hardy includes the following as trends that will affect us.

**The Money Crunch**
- reduction of government funded programs
- competition for donations
- increasingly cost-conscious environment
- societal rejection of the belief that dollars solve problems

**Pressure on Nonprofits to Justify Themselves**
- increased expectations from the public
- increased expectations that nonprofits will respond to real need and perform with managerial competence

**Recipients of Services (Consumers and Clients) will demand more power**
- need for processes through which recipients have influence on the way service is delivered
- need for responsiveness to consumers

**Increased Importance of Collaboration among Organizations Pursuing Common Goals**
- social problems are seen as too massive to be addressed by one organization
- funders will encourage collaboration

**Boards of Directors will be more active and involved**
- the trends above will force boards to become better informed, more active and involved

**Forces working Counter to Voluntarism will Accelerate and Intensify**
- recruiting and retaining volunteers will require more flexibility and creativity than before
- there will be more competition among organizations for fewer volunteers
- voluntarism may be perceived as taking jobs from the unemployed
- voluntarism may be perceived as exploitative

**Government Regulation of Nonprofits will increase**
- this may be burdensome and costly

**People Will be Committed to their own Self-development Rather than to Organizations**
- organizations will secure commitment and loyalty only if the work is relevant to the individual

**People will demonstrate greater sophistication in interpersonal relationships**
- organizations which have relied on paternalistic approaches to clients, staff and volunteers will not succeed.
- clients, staff and volunteers increasingly desire genuine relationships.