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

"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 ownership 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 weakness 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? According 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 describing 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 budgeting. The resulting document is reviewed again by relevant committees 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 commitment 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 assumptions
- failure to identify sources of ambiguity
- 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 strategic 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 example, move in flocks and mix freely, while robins live in well-defined parts of the garden and for the most part communicate antagonistically 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 institutional 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.