

Who is involved in planning?

People with a stake in the outcomes of the multi-year action plan should be involved in the planning preparation, process, implementation, and evaluation.

When should multi-year action planning take place?

Ideally, this type of planning should occur every four or five years with annual plans that nest within the multi-year plan.

What timeline is minimally effective for multi-year action planning?

One month-introducing the basic concepts and tools for the planning process

One to three months-conduct local planning processes

One month-refine local plans, produce a draft, and gain stakeholder buy-in into the plan

One month-finalize the plan and disseminate it to stakeholders

Ongoing-implementation, evaluation, and readjusting the plan

How should a group approach planning?

- I. Preparation phase (plan for planning)
 - A. Determine the planning question
 - B. Determine the planning process
 - C. Determine what the plan will look like
 - D. Ensure a diverse set of stakeholders are involved in the process
 - E. Secure needed resources for planning
 - F. Attend to planning logistics

- II. Planning process (reflecting and focusing)
 - A. Welcome/introductions
 - B. Planning background/purpose/history
 1. Purposes of planning
 2. Organizational mandates
 3. The planning question
 4. The planning product(s)/expectations
 - C. Interpreting information (rethinking)
 1. External trends/forces
 2. Internal trends/forces (who and what we are, what we do and why)
 3. Implications
 - D. Strengths/concerns analysis
 - E. Create a shared vision
 1. Based on strengths/concerns
 2. Based on planning purpose/question/mandates
 3. Individual futuring/vision
 4. Compile similar visions
 5. Priority rank visions to develop a group vision

- F. Turn priority visions into outcomes (how do we get there?)
 - G. Create purposeful actions toward outcomes (restructuring/strategies)
 - 1. Action plans
 - 2. Evaluation plans (feedback system)
 - H. Commit to action
 - 1. Establish stakeholder adoption of the plan
 - 2. Determine follow up leadership
- III. Plan implementation (revitalization)
- A. Revisit the plan and progress frequently
 - B. Reassess and monitor the plan to fit environmental and social forces

What planning resources are available?

Staff: UWEX regional evaluation specialists
 Select UWEX county educators (RESs have a list)
 Planning consultants
 Communities of Excellence workbook
 Planning Processes: Planning for Action (RESs know this)
 Nominal Group Technique
 Delphi Technique
 Focus Group Interviews
 Affinity Diagram
 Survey

(all these processes except Planning for Action are found in: *Cooperative Extension Program Planning in Wisconsin* edited by Terry Gibson and found at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/planning/pdf/ProgramPlanning.pdf>)

Trends and Forces Determination Processes:
 Force field analysis (forces and responses—see *The Quality Tool Box* by Nancy Tagu, pages 142-144)
 SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)
 Forecasting trends (scenario development and analogies)

Methods for Prioritizing: Anchored rating scale
 Paired comparisons
 Rank-weight technique
 Distribution of points

Tools: Planning scenarios/case studies
 The Kansas University Community Toolbox
http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/tools/EN/chapter_1--7.htm

Critical Elements of Effective Multi-Year Action Planning Processes

“Success does not happen by accident.”

Robert Simerly

An effective planning process matches involves the following:

Focus

- Emphasizes change through focused action
- Takes thinking beyond a one year time frame
- Is based on a clear understanding and consensus of the end goal
- Creates organizational vision for the future

Stakeholder Involvement

- Views all participants as having legitimate power and resources
- Includes a diverse cross section of players at the planning table early in the process and throughout implementation
- Starts with people where they are at and tailors the process to the situation (the planning process is not prescribed)
- Creates commitment or recommitment of stakeholders that promotes ownership of the process and the plan

Analysis of Organizational Environment

- Honors organizational mandates
- Clarifies organizational mission and values
- Assesses external and internal environments (environmental scanning)
- Identifies issues facing the organization and strategies to manage those issues
- Builds public trust in the organization’s efforts and people
- Matches the organizational culture through an aligned planning process, activities, and evaluation

Facilitative Leadership

- Requires a planning champion
- Supports shared leadership in plan development, implementation, and evaluation
- Supports joint leadership for follow through

Effective Group Planning Process

- Promotes and honors surprises as part of the learning process
- Is a participative process guided by a planning committee
- Includes implementation of action and monitoring of results
- Takes time
- Is based on a supportive environment with mutual respect, trust, and openness

- Improves decision making
- Nurtures creativity, innovation, and diversity
- Emphasizes learning through reflection and critical thinking
- Honors a balance between conflict/differing perspectives and coming to consensus
- Builds upon academic research and the experiences of participants

Planning Ground Rules:

- Participate
- Be honest
- Be open
- Listen
- Have a good time
- Be flexible
- Nurture differing perspectives
- Follow up

Critical Elements of an Effective Multi-Year Action Plan

An effective multi-year action plan includes:

Clear Focus

- Revolves around a few focused long range outcomes
- Effectively communicate the intent to move from vision to action
- Is concise and clear
- Includes constellations or patterns of activities versus random or disconnected activities
- Includes outcome objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and have a specific time frame

Strong Links

- Includes buy-in/commitment from stakeholders
- Shows a link between the environment and the organization's efforts
- Takes into account external forces
- Has a tight connection between resources and action
- Is clearly connected to organization mission, vision, and mandates

Evaluation and Learning

- Includes measures of effectiveness
- Reveals growth and innovation rather than preservation of the norm
- Highlights a plan for learning and feedback (evaluation plan)
- Determines a process for using feedback to improve programs

Supporting Resources

- Determines how resources will be allocated to get results
- Is practical and doable with resources available
- Includes at least 10% of the budget for evaluation