



# Promoting Community Health and Development

*The Community Tool Box Curriculum*

## *Module 5*

Developing Strategic  
and Action Plans

**KU** WORK GROUP  
FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH  
& DEVELOPMENT  

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Life Span Institute

## **Module 5 Developing Strategic and Action Plans**

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#### **Curriculum Module Set:**

Module 1 - Creating and Maintaining Coalitions and Partnerships  
Module 2 - Assessing Community Needs and Resources  
Module 3 - Analyzing Problems and Goals  
Module 4 - Developing a Framework or Model of Change  
Module 5 - Developing Strategic or Action Plans  
Module 6 - Building Leadership  
Module 7 - Developing an Intervention  
Module 8 - Increasing Participation and Membership  
Module 9 - Enhancing Cultural Competence  
Module 10 - Advocating for Change  
Module 11 - Influencing Policy Development  
Module 12 - Evaluating the Initiative  
Module 13 - Implementing a Social Marketing Campaign  
Module 14 - Writing a Grant Application for Funding  
Module 15 - Improving Organizational Management and Development  
Module 16 - Sustaining the Project or Initiative

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# *Module 5*

## Developing Strategic and Action Plans

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“Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized.

Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will not die.”

—Daniel H. Burnham, Architect

**Promoting Community Health and Development  
The Community Tool Box (CTB) Curriculum  
Module 5 Participant Guide**

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### Introduction

After assessing the community's needs and resources, analyzing problems and goals, and developing a framework or model of change, you are now positioned to move forward in planning for action.

Community work, which involves multiple individuals and organizations in change efforts, is particularly ripe for the process of strategic and action planning. Every player must agree and be clear about the direction and specific steps that each will take to move the effort forward.

The planning process gets everyone together, laying out a vision and objectives to direct the group's activities. It gives group members shared decision-making and a common language that describes the work, ensures buy-in, and outlines what lies ahead.

Developing strategic and action plans provides a map for moving from a community's vision to improvements in community-level outcomes. The strategic plan provides overall direction on the path going from where things are now to where we hope they will be. The action plan identifies specific changes the group seeks to accomplish its goals. Community work can be greatly enhanced by a clear vision and mission statement, explicit objectives, varied strategies, and a comprehensive and detailed action plan.

Module 5 walks participants through the multiple processes involved in creating such plans, using a process called "VMOSA," where a Vision, Mission, Objectives, Strategies and an Action Plan are developed. It also helps participants understand how to review and build consensus for the plans, and teaches participants to make full use of the plans to guide and enhance the work.

To make the most of this learning module, consider the following:

#### **PRIOR EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING**

It will be helpful if participants have already gathered and analyzed sources of information about the community and the particular initiative. Products generated in prior modules provide the background necessary to develop sound plans. These include considerations about building partnerships (i.e., Are the right people involved?), addressing community needs and resources (i.e., Do we know what we want to effect?), analyzing problems and goals (i.e., what personal and environmental factors are at work? Do we know what we are up against? Who can help?), and developing a model of change (i.e., What is the pathway to the outcomes we seek?)

As always, openness to the contributions of all interested parties will result in a richer and more broadly embraced plan.

#### **RECOMMENDED READINGS**

We recommend the following readings and resources from the Community Tool Box, <http://ctb.ku.edu>:

1. [Chapter 8, Section 1: An Overview of Strategic Planning or "VMOSA" \(Vision, Mission, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Plans\)](#)
2. [Chapter 8, Section 2: Proclaiming Your Dream: Developing Vision and Mission Statements](#)
3. [Chapter 8, Section 3: Creating Objectives](#)
4. [Chapter 8, Section 4: Developing Successful Strategies: Planning to Win](#)
5. [Chapter 8, Section 5: Developing an Action Plan](#)
6. [Chapter 8, Section 6: Obtaining Feedback from Constituents: What Changes are Important and Feasible?](#)
7. [Chapter 8, Section 7: Identifying Action Steps in Bringing About Community and System Changes](#)
8. [Toolkit: Developing Strategic and Action Plans](#)

### KEYWORDS AND CONCEPTS TO LISTEN FOR

Action Plans; Agents; Behavioral Objectives; Benchmarks; Candidate Factors; Collaborators; Community and System Changes; Community-level Outcome Objectives; Conditions; Consensus; Levels; Markers; Measurable; Mission Statement; Objectives; Outcomes; Process Objectives; Resistance and Barriers; Sectors; Stakeholders; Strategic Plan; Strategies; Targets; Vision; VMOSA

At the conclusion of this learning module, you may expect to have the following:

### KNOWLEDGE

- Definitions and descriptions of the elements of strategic and actions plans as used in community health and development work
- Understanding of the value and process of strategic planning in addressing community issues
- Understanding of the skills and steps required to develop a vision, mission, objectives, strategies and action plans
- Understanding of the need to address the environmental conditions in which behavior occurs, and five categories of strategies to initiate behavior change
- How to effectively link assets and resources to community needs, including both personal and environmental (risk and protective) factors, with targeted strategies
- Why a combination of strategies that span across multiple sectors and include changes in programs, policies and practices are required to affect lasting community improvement

### SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

- Work with others to translate dreams for your community into a vision for your initiative
- Explain the initiative to others in a clear mission statement
- Collect and use credible, measurable baseline data, and then set markers for progress
- Identify both behavioral and population-level objectives
- Compare objectives against criteria: SMART+C
- Apply broad thinking about vision and mission to more specific objectives, then act on these in targeted actions and interventions
- Identify strategies that are appropriate to your resources, opportunities, and barriers
- Consider issues of scope and level in selecting from among multiple available strategies
- Consider ways in which to affect community and system changes that support the behaviors and outcomes you want to increase or decrease
- Consider creating or modifying an appropriate mix of changes (i.e., new programs, policies and practices in relevant sectors) to increase the likelihood of success
- Prioritize the community and system changes sought, realistically assessing their importance and the feasibility of bringing about each change
- Invite members and partners to “own” or publicly accept responsibility for accomplishing specific community and system changes within designated timeframes

### CORE PRODUCT

***Preliminary strategic and action plans*** for your initiative, developed in cooperation with other members and partners, that reflect the group’s goals (Vision and Mission and Objectives) and specific strategies and community and system changes to be sought (including who will do what by when).

These preliminary documents should be reviewed and adapted beyond the scope of this module, with input from others. Your organization’s membership, as well as other collaborating partners, needs to be provided the opportunity to frame these statements and plans before they are adopted for use.

## **Content Overview**

**Lesson 5.1** VMOSA I: Vision, Mission and Objectives

**Lesson 5.2** VMOSA II: Strategies and Action Plans

**Lesson 5.3** Reviewing and Building Consensus on Your Action Plan

**Lesson 5.4** Using Strategic and Action Plans to Guide and Enhance Your Work

### **Lesson Activities and Worksheets**

*5.1a Visioning*

*5.1b Writing a Mission Statement*

*5.1c Developing Measurable Objectives*

*5.2a A Strategies Mix*

*5.2b Surfacing and Selecting Community and System Changes*

*5.2c Action Planning*

*5.3 Identifying Consensus Builders*

**Lesson 5.5** Putting It All Together: Creating Strategic and Action Plans

**Glossary**

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## Workshop Agenda

### Orientation for Module 5 (if appropriate)

- Welcome and Introductions: Icebreaker
- Expectations/Ground Rules
- Review of Curriculum, Module, Background and Learning Objectives

### Lesson 5.1 **VMOSA I: Vision, Mission and Objectives**

Developing Strategic and Action Plans

- 5.1a *Visioning*
- 5.1b *Writing a Mission Statement*
- 5.1c *Developing Measurable Objectives*

### Lesson 5.2 **VMOSA II: Strategies and Action Plans**

- 5.2a *A Strategies Mix*
- 5.2b *Surfacing and Selecting Community and System Changes*
- 5.2c *Action Planning*

### Lesson 5.3 **Reviewing and Building Consensus on Your Action Plan**

- 5.3 *Identifying Consensus Builders*

### Lesson 5.4 **Using Strategic and Action Plans to Guide and Enhance Your Work**

### Lesson 5.5 **Putting It All Together: Creating Strategic and Action Plans**

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## Lesson 5.1

### **VMOSA I: Vision, Mission and Objectives**

What is a **vision**?

Your vision communicates what your initiative believes are the ideal conditions for your community; it communicates what success would look like. The vision should contain brief phrases that convey the community's dreams for the future (e.g., healthy children, education for all).

What is a **mission**?

A mission statement describes *what* the group is going to do, and *why* it is going to do it. Although similar to vision statements, mission statements are more concrete and "action-oriented." The mission might refer to a problem (e.g., substandard housing), or to a goal (e.g., universal health insurance). Mission statements communicate your group's overarching goals. Mission statements should be concise, outcome oriented, and inclusive (e.g., "To create a thriving African American community through development of jobs, education, housing, and cultural pride").

What are **objectives**?

Objectives refer to specific measurable results for the broad goals of the initiative; they generally lay out *how much* of *what* will be accomplished by *when*. There are three basic types of objectives:

- *Process objectives* refer to the implementation of activities necessary to achieve other objectives (e.g., number of people who receive training).
- *Behavioral objectives* refer to changing the behaviors of people (what they are doing and saying) and the products (or results) of their behaviors. For example, a group addressing substance abuse might develop an objective around having a decreased amount of substance abuse among youth.
- *Community-level outcome objectives* go beyond individual behavior to outcomes for groups of people. Community-level outcome objectives relate to improvement at the level of the whole community (e.g., a city, county, neighborhood, school district). Objectives vary depending on the mission; for instance they might include: a) for Preventing Infant Mortality, reducing the number of infants who die per 1000 in a state; b) for Substance Abuse Prevention, reducing single-nighttime vehicle crashes or arrest rates for drinking and driving; or c) for Improving Education, increasing the percentage of youth in the school district who graduate from high school.

#### **DEVELOPING STRATEGIC AND ACTION PLANS**

You are engaged in a community process because you have a desire to move your community from where things are now to where things ought to be. And, you have some reason for believing in your group's ability to move in that direction. But how can that happen? Even with great ideas, good information, and the good will of caring people, without a plan, energy and activities can be wasted. This is where VMOSA comes into play to help you develop a **V**ision, **M**ission, **O**bjectives, **S**trategies, and **A**ction Plan.

**Why should you use the VMOSA planning process?**

- The VMOSA process grounds your dreams. It makes good ideas possible by laying out what needs to happen in order to achieve your vision.
- By creating this process in a group effort (taking care to involve both people affected by the problem and those with the abilities to change it), it allows your organization to build consensus around the vision and the necessary steps it should take.
- VMOSA helps focus on short-term goals while keeping sight of your long-term vision and mission.

**When should you use VMOSA?**

Of course, it always makes sense for your organization to have the direction and focus VMOSA gives you, but there are some times it makes particularly good sense to use this process, such as:

- When you are starting a new organization.
- When your organization is starting a new initiative or large project, or is going to begin work in a new direction.
- When your group is moving into a new phase of an ongoing effort.
- When you are trying to invigorate an older initiative that has lost its focus or momentum.

### Engaging in Strategic Planning

When your initiative or organization is ready to move forward with specific, targeted actions that will begin to affect the community, you are ready to engage in strategic planning. The first phases of this process involve articulating the broad view: vision and mission statements and objectives.

#### 1. Convene a planning group

Bring together a group of individuals and organizations from the community who are affected by the problem or goal and/or who are in a position to address it. Invite participants to engage in the process by: a) sharing what they know, b) describing what they've heard from their neighbors or others, and c) sharing how they see the future. Indicate who will be brought together.

#### 2. Describe the vision for the community or initiative (dreams for how things should be)

Understand that having a clear vision statement can:

- Draw people to common work
  - Give hope for a better future
  - Allow organizers to discuss alternatives in concrete terms
  - Inspire the organization
  - Provide a base for the other important elements of VMOSA
- a. In a workshop, retreat, or dialogue about the group's vision, capture:
    - Dreams for the community or initiative (e.g., safe neighborhoods)
    - What success would look like (e.g., healthy workplace)
    - How things ought to be (e.g., caring communities)
    - What people and conditions would look like if things were consistent with that picture (e.g., health for all)
  - b. Review the multiple vision statements for conciseness (usually two words) and positive framing. Support diversity of vision by including multiple vision statements.
  - c. Identify vision statements with particular power:
    - Choose vision statements that are embraced by the group
    - (As appropriate) Select/edit the vision statements that are particularly effective in conveying the group's vision
    - Check to see that everyone's voice is heard in the final selections
  - d. Select one statement that concisely expresses why the group has come together. It should be acceptable to all members.

#### 3. State the mission (the what and why)

- a. Recall that having a clear mission statement can:
  - Transform the dreams of your vision into more specific terms
  - Explain your goals to others and give them assurance
  - Increase the chances that potential members will be attracted
  - Reassure funding sources that your initiative is a good investment
- b. Develop a mission statement that includes what is to be done and why it is to be done (e.g., "creating caring communities through education and opportunities to serve"):
  - Describe the essential "what" of the organization or initiative by reviewing its core functions and current programs and activities (e.g., training, advocacy, support)
  - Explain the essential "why" of the organization or initiative by reviewing the vision statements (e.g., safe and healthy neighborhoods)
  - Frame the mission statement as a single sentence that captures the common purpose (essential what and why) (e.g., "Promoting healthy families [the why] through parent training and community support [the what]").
- c. The mission statement should be:

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- Clear regarding what is to be done and why
- Concise (usually one sentence)
- Outcome oriented
- Robust, leaving open a variety of possible means
- Inclusive, reflecting the voices of all people who are involved

### 4. State the objectives of your initiative (how much of what you hope to accomplish by when)

- Understand that having set objectives can:
  - Serve as a marker of accomplishments and provide benchmarks for accountability
  - Help prioritize goals and activities
  - Keep focus on mission throughout change and growth
- Create objectives following a four step process:
  - Define or reaffirm your vision and mission statements
  - Determine the changes to be made
  - Collect baseline data on the issues to be addressed
  - Set the objectives for your initiative (e.g., “By 2012, to assure that all children are immunized”)
- When developing objectives, clearly describe:
  - Implementation objectives: the outputs or activities to achieve other objectives (e.g., “By 2010, the curriculum will be implemented in all participating schools”).
  - Behavioral objectives: the changes in individuals’ behaviors if the group’s efforts were successful (What would people be saying and doing differently?) (e.g., “By 2012, the percentage of adults reporting regular physical activity would increase by 30%”)
  - Community-level objectives: the changes in community-level outcomes we would see if the partnership’s objectives were completed (How would changes in individuals’ behaviors add up to outcomes for all those in the community?) (e.g., “By 2020, the number of cases of violence in schools will decrease by 40%”)
- Ensure objectives are “SMART + C”:
  - Specific
  - Measurable (at least potentially)
  - Achievable
  - Relevant (to the mission)
  - Timed (date for attainment)
  - Challenging (requiring extraordinary effort)

Be flexible with deadlines in creating objectives—defining objectives is time-consuming and may require second and third considerations for clarity and completeness.

## Lesson 5.2

### VMOSA II: Strategies and Action Plans

#### What are *strategies*?

Strategies explain how the initiative will reach its objectives. Generally, organizations will have a wide variety of strategies that include people from all of the different parts, or *sectors*, of the group or community. These strategies range from very broad approaches that encompass people and resources from many different parts of the community to very specific activities that take place on a much more focused level.

#### What is an *action plan*?

An action plan describes in great detail exactly how strategies will be implemented to accomplish the objectives developed earlier in this process. The plan refers to: a) specific community and system changes to be sought, and b) the specific action steps necessary to bring about changes in the relevant sectors of the community. Community and system changes refer to new or modified programs (e.g., an after-school program), policies (e.g., passing an ordinance to assure access to nutritional food for all school children), and practices (e.g., providing needed childhood immunizations as part of regular clinic visits).

Action steps are developed for each component of the intervention, or for each of the community and system changes to be sought. Include the following aspects for each of the steps:

- Action step(s): What will happen
- Person(s) responsible: Who will do what
- Dated: Timing of each action step; usually includes duration and completion dates
- Resources required: Resources and support (both what is needed and what's available)
- Barriers or resistance, and a plan to overcome them!
- Collaborators: Who else should know about this action

You completed the first four steps of the VMOSA process in section 5.1. You convened a planning group and then articulated a vision, a mission, and objectives. Now, it is time to apply that thinking to specific strategies and action plans to result in a comprehensive strategic plan.

#### 1. Identify the strategies (how things will be accomplished)

- a. Why do this? Developing strategies can help your initiative:
  - Focus its efforts
  - Take advantage of resources and opportunities
  - Respond effectively to resistance and barriers
  - Make more efficient use of time, energy, and resources
  - Have a greater likelihood of accomplishing its mission
- b. Refer back to the information you have already generated in prior lessons to select strategies that are meaningful and relevant to your work. These include:
  - 1) The *personal and environmental risk and protective factors* that are at work in the effort:
    - a) *Personal factors* may include: knowledge, beliefs, skills, education and training, social status, experience, cultural norms and practices, cognitive or physical abilities, gender, age, and genetic predisposition.
    - b) *Environmental factors* may include: social support and ties, available resources and services, barriers (including financial, physical, and communication), social approval, incentives and disincentives, policies, environmental hazards, living conditions, poverty and other social disparities.
  - 2) Those who can most benefit and contribute and how they can be reached or involved in the effort:
    - a) *Targets of change*—those who may be at particular risk for the issue
    - b) *Agents of change*—those who may be in a position to bring about change (often includes targets of change)
    - c) *Community sector*—(e.g., schools, faith organizations, neighborhoods, or businesses through which targets and agents of change can be reached or involved)
- c. When developing strategies, identify:
  - 1) The *levels* to be targeted (i.e., individuals and families, organizations, and sectors, whole community, and/or broader system)

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- 2) Whether the strategy will be *universal* (e.g., all children and youth) or *targeted* (e.g., those youth who may be at greater risk for the problem)
  - 3) The behavioral strategies to be used—approaches may include:
    - a) Providing information and enhancing skills
    - b) Modifying access, barriers, and opportunities
    - c) Changing the consequences (incentives and disincentives that affect the problem or goal)
    - d) Enhancing services and support
    - e) Modifying policies and broader systems that affect the issue
  - 4) For each strategy, consider what *programs, policies, and/or practices* should be created or modified. Consider “best practices” or intervention approaches for which there is evidence of effectiveness. Make a list, keeping in mind how they work together to address the problem or goal.
- d. Review the strategies for:
- Whether they are likely to be effective in achieving results
  - Consistency with the overall vision, mission, and objectives
  - Goodness of fit with the resources and opportunities available
  - Anticipated resistance and barriers and how they can be minimized
  - Whether those who are affected are reached
- e. Report to the group and revise based on feedback
- 2. To create an action plan, select particular community and system changes (interventions) to be sought that will result in accomplishment of your goals and objectives**
- a. Understand that developing an action plan can:
    - Lend credibility to your group or effort
    - Ensure that you don't overlook details
    - Help you understand the feasibility of changes
    - Enhance efficiency
    - Provide accountability
  - b. For each strategy that you've prioritized, select particular community or system changes (i.e., new or modified programs, policies, and practices) to be sought that will achieve the objectives. Consider “best practices” or intervention approaches for which there is evidence of effectiveness.
  - c. After compiling a list of potential changes, review each candidate community or system change and consider its:
    - 1) Importance to the mission
    - 2) Feasibility
  - d. Secure a formal decision from the group on what community or system changes (interventions) will be sought.
  - e. Convene a planning group of community members to design the action plan. The group should be inclusive of a variety of individuals and groups:
    - Influential people from all groups affected
    - People directly involved in the problem or goal
    - Members of key organizations
    - Members of ethnic and cultural groups
    - Different sectors of the community (e.g., government, business)
  - f. Identify action steps for each change to be sought or intervention element to be implemented (who is going to do what by when). Describe:
    - 1) What specific change or aspect of the intervention that will occur
    - 2) Who will carry it out
    - 3) When the change or intervention will be implemented or for how long it will be maintained
    - 4) Resources (money and staff) needed/available
    - 5) Who should know what about this (communication plan)
  - g. Evaluate the goodness of the overall action plan for:
    - 1) Completeness – Are all the changes and intervention aspects intended by your group included? Are a wide variety of strategies and sectors utilized?
    - 2) Clarity – Is who will do what by when apparent?
    - 3) Sufficiency – If all that is proposed was accomplished, would it meet the group's mission and objectives? If not, what additional changes or interventions need to be planned and implemented?

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- 4) Current – Does the action plan reflect the current work? Does it anticipate possible opportunities and barriers in the future?
  
- 5) Flexibility – As the plan unfolds, is it flexible enough to respond to changes in the community at large that have not been anticipated? Can it be modified as objectives are accomplished or goals adjusted?
- h. Follow through with your plans, keep people informed, keep track of what you accomplish, and celebrate those accomplishments!

You may use a chart like this one if you find it helpful for organizing your information:

<b>Action Step</b> (What will be done)	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b> (By whom)	<b>Date Completed</b> (By when)	<b>Resources Required</b> (At what costs)	<b>Communication/ Collaborators</b> (Who else should know about this)
1. Preparing a plan for communicating key messages	Marketing firm	April 2010	\$15,000 (fundraising)	Business Action Group
2. Influence employers to offer flextime policies	Maria Suarez (Business Action Group)	September 2011	Multiple hours per site \$250 for brochures	Schools Action Group
3. Develop childcare coop at local church	Jomella and Curtis (Schools Action Group)	July 2012	Two hours per week for one year Parent involvement Church space for coop Training for volunteers	Business Action Group Schools Action Group Faith Communities

## Lesson 5.3

### ***Reviewing and Building Consensus on Your Action Plan***

What is **consensus**?

In a consensus, the entire group will agree upon a certain course of action. In a true collaboration, a broad and inclusive group of those affected should be asked to reach consensus on decisions that have an impact.

If a consensus cannot be achieved, the group might vote, or choose to study the issue some more before even taking a vote. Alternatively, the group might vote to place certain variations on the table for debate, then work to achieve consensus among them.

Throughout this module, you have worked to develop preliminary vision and mission statements, objectives, strategies and action plans. And, your results represent the best thinking of the people who were able to participate. However, it is unlikely that everyone who will be asked to endorse, support, or work towards your goals was at the table. Yet, it is clear that their understanding of the planning process and its products, as well as their feedback and input into those results, is necessary. It is also clear that your understanding of their perspectives and reactions will help to further adapt and improve these planning products, as well as to anticipate opposition. Therefore, we recommend as the final stages of the development process gathering together the people who most care about the work and communicating the evolving plans.

#### **1. Learn what other members of your community think of your statements and plans (vision, mission, objectives) before you start to use them regularly.**

- a. Talk to the same community leaders or focus group members you spoke to originally.
  - 1) Ensure that they don't find the statements offensive in any way.
  - 2) Ensure that community members agree that the statements together capture the spirit of what they believe and desire. You might find you have inadvertently omitted something very important.
- b. Hold listening or brainstorming sessions to discover and create new possibilities. While this is not a time to recreate a plan that has yet to be implemented, there may be adaptations that can be made, or strategies added that will make the action plan more complete.
- c. Critique the current vision and plans against community needs and assets with as many of your current partners as possible. Determine if the plan reflects well the needs of the community, and that it makes use of community assets and resources, as identified in earlier modules.
- d. Schedule public sessions in which the plans may be reviewed and shared with others.
  - 1) Use the principles of influence to inform participants in the open, broad-based and thorough process that was used to reach the preliminary statements and plans, and to encourage their support of the planned efforts.
  - 2) Discuss options that were considered but discarded, as well as the options that were selected for inclusion, and, if possible, share the essence of the dialogue that occurred in the formative stages.
  - 3) Anticipate concerns and opposition, and be prepared to discuss if and how issues were considered in the formative stages.

#### **2. Solicit support of the vision and mission statements, objectives, strategies, and action plans that are ultimately agreed upon and put forward.**

- a. When working with other organizations, request a form of official recognition, endorsement or partnership, such as:
  - 1) Letter of support that can be publicly shared
  - 2) Shared sponsorship of activities or events
  - 3) Use of that group's name and logo in promotional materials
- b. When speaking with individuals or loosely organized groups, ask for support ranging from networking and supporting the work in their personal interactions with others to associating with the work in a visible way.

Once your collaboration is confident of a vision, mission, objectives, strategies and action plans that are supported in principle by your agreed-upon, identified constituents and partners,

#### **3. Create a visible, far-reaching, celebratory promotion to officially unveil your statements and plans.**

- a. Include all of the players and partners who have helped to frame the work.
- b. Include community members who will be affected by and/or can champion the work.

- c. Involve media and other means of getting the word out so that your message is spread in a timely, clear fashion that enhances your work.

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## Lesson 5.4

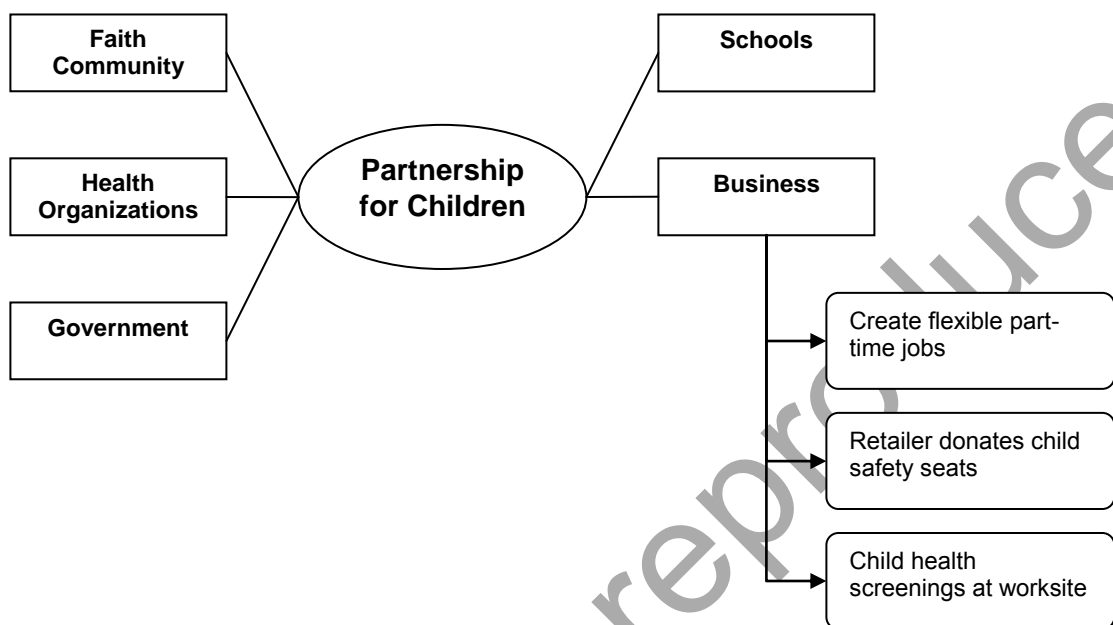
### ***Using Strategic and Action Plans to Guide and Enhance Your Work***

Congratulations! Developing vision and mission statements and outlining objectives, strategies and action plans are huge steps for your organization—and well worth celebrating! Still, there is more work to be done. Next, you have to decide how to best use these statements and plans.

There are many, many ways in which your organization may choose to use its vision and mission statements and its objectives, strategies and action plans. Of course, one of the primary reasons is to achieve agreement on a common language in which to express your purpose, and the steps that will guide your work.

- 1. Use the elements of your strategic and action plans to communicate your initiative's purpose to others:**
  - a. Identify who should know about the group's vision, mission, objectives, strategies and action plans
  - b. Publicize your vision and mission statements widely:
    - Add them to your letterhead or stationary
    - Use them on your website
    - Use them when you give interviews
    - Give away items such as T-shirts or bookmarks
    - Display them on the cover of your newsletter or reports
- 2. Implement the action planning steps. Dedicate their priority by considering:**
  - 1) Which changes need to be completed first? Some changes may require other changes and/or that relationships first be established.
  - 2) Which changes are easier or quicker to bring about? Could completing them give the organization's membership a sense of success and/or provide the organization with much needed public exposure?
  - 3) Which changes are more important or key to meeting the group's objectives?
  - 4) Which changes would inspire and encourage participants and/or build credibility within the community?
- 3. Make use of your plans during ongoing evaluation and organizational development.**
  - a. Determine if you are on track to bring about the changes outlined in your strategic plan.
  - b. Check the organization's core functions:
    - 1) In light of the vision, mission statement, and group's objectives, are the core functions of the organization represented? (e.g., advocacy, training)
    - 2) Periodically revisit the action plans and determine what adjustments might be appropriate to the vision, mission, and/or action plan.
  - c. Find common ground and anticipate potential conflict:
    - 1) Identify potential disagreements about ends and means that the group faces.
    - 2) Indicate how you might use this framing of the problem or goal and how to address it to build consensus.
  - d. Plan how to detect or discern opportunities so that you are ready when they arise.
    - 1) Identify the criteria that will be used to judge an "opportunity." These might include qualities such as:
      - a) Consistency with the vision and mission
      - b) Availability of resources
      - c) Contribution to the action plan
    - 2) In light of the vision, mission, and action plan, pinpoint new or emerging opportunities for the community initiative or organization.
- 4. Review your strategic and action plans with an eye toward identifying additional partners.**
  - a. Indicate who can help the group achieve its vision and mission. List organizations that share this common work.
  - b. In light of the vision, mission, and action plan, identify some potential partners with which the community initiative or organization should collaborate. A graphic such as the one below (for a child health effort) may help to expand your thinking.

### Using Your Action Plan to Identify Collaborators



**5. Review the strategic and action plans at regular intervals.**

- a. As your group grows and the objectives are accomplished or conditions change, members may choose to revise the action plan.
  - 1) Political, economic or other realities may make some initial action steps difficult, if not impossible to pursue. Alternative activities or extended timeframes may be required.
  - 2) Enthusiastic members may have completed tasks and now need new challenges.
  - 3) Burned-out or tired members may need to be rested or shifted to different tasks.
- b. Significant changes in circumstances may warrant a review of the vision and mission statements as well. Has your initiative outlived its usefulness? Do you have a terrific organization that could direct its activities and energy in new directions? Are there similar organizations or initiatives with which you should partner or join?

## Activity 5.1a

### Visioning

Time: 25 minutes

Goal: This exercise is designed to help participants dream broadly about the future of their community and needed changes to occur to bring about their vision.

Directions:

1. Have participants pair up for a dialogue. One participant will ask questions, listen and record while the second responds. Then the two will switch roles. Each dialogue should be limited to 3-5 minutes in length.

2. Ask the following questions and record the key points:

- a. **Essential why.** "What is the dream or ideal that you and the community seek? What would success look like for those who would benefit?"

*e.g., "Well, I want the children in this neighborhood to have a safe place to grow up. I want to see them happy, healthy, and eager to learn. I just want children to know their lives can be better. I want their lives to be better."*

- b. **Essential what.** "What is one thing that would have to change in order for this dream to become reality? What key things would be present to help bring this about?"

*e.g., "It seems like the first thing is to try to get drugs and gangs out of here. We have to have better support and options for our young people so that the younger kids will have someone to look up to who is doing positive things."*

3. The listener should repeat back to the speaker what he/she has heard, in the most concise way possible (only a few words), and ask the speaker if his/her interpretation is correct.

*e.g., Listener: "I heard you say that you want a safe neighborhood, a place where all children can grow up healthy."*

*Speaker: "Well, that's much of it. But, I also think we need to help young people have support and opportunities so they can stay away from drugs and gangs."*

*Listener: "OK, so you want a safe and healthy place and opportunities for all children, and you want them to grow up in a neighborhood free of gangs and drugs."*

*Speaker: "Right. That's it exactly."*

## **Activity 5.1a (cont.)**

### ***Visioning***

4. The speaker then repeats, in the more concise language, their vision (only a few words) and one thing they believe would help lead to that vision (a sentence fragment). For example: “safe and healthy places” and “neighborhoods that support and provide opportunities for our young people.” Practice it again, if needed, to be able to state it with confidence!
5. The two participants should switch roles, so that the listener now has a chance to share a dream. Repeat steps 2 and 3 for the second responder.
6. At the end of the allotted time, the pairs are separated and two groups are formed. Within each small group, participants share aloud their visions and ideas for change. Discuss in your group if there are similarities in visions between group members and if there is any agreement about ways in which to affect change.
7. In the large group, discuss the common themes and issues. Are there any similarities in responses between the groups? What are the more common vision statements? Also, surface any ideas expressed originally that were not categorized along with others in the small or large group discussions.
8. Record a list of consensus vision statements (only a few words each) and post them on the wall. You may add additional thoughts or commentary to the list as the day progresses.
9. Record a list of the ideas generated for bringing about the vision and post them also, for later use and for participants to write on.

### ***Carrying It Forward***

Reflect on the process of listening for participants' individual visions for the work. Are there similarities or differences in peoples' dreams for the future? What makes it possible for this vision to be shared? How can the diversity of a group's vision be preserved in its vision statements? Does this statement of the group's vision have the power to motivate people to contribute? How will you use this process with others in your community?

## Activity 5.1b

### *Writing a Mission Statement*

Time: 25 minutes

Goal: This activity will move participants from the vision identified in Activity 5.1a to concrete language that describes what the initiative is doing or going to do, and why.

Steps:

1. Gather together the ideas about the “essential why” generated in Activity 5.1a: Visioning regarding why the group exists. (This is the “what is the dream or ideal you seek...” question.)
2. As a whole group, select those statements of the “essential why” (the dream) that have particular relevance for the vision(s) identified for your initiative in Activity 5.1a. Pay particular attention to their ability to communicate why the group exists to others.

*e.g., To develop a safe and healthy neighborhood through...*

*e.g., Creating healthy communities through...*

3. Gather together the ideas about the “essential what” expressed in Activity 5.1a regarding what should be done to bring about the dream: the ways in which the “what would have to happen...” question. If available, also consider agreed upon or written descriptions of core functions and current activities of the group (e.g., education, advocacy, research).
4. As a whole group, select those “essential what” statements that have particular relevance for the vision(s) identified for your initiative in Activity 5.1a. Pay particular attention to their ability to describe your (proposed or current) activities and rationale, expanding or editing as you go.

*e.g., To develop a safe and healthy neighborhood through collaborative planning, community action, and policy advocacy.*

*e.g., Creating healthy communities for children through prevention, early intervention, and family support.*

5. Ideally, as a whole group (or, in small groups if necessary) and for no more than 10 minutes total, participants should each select one statement that best describes what they believe the initiative should undertake. Participants may choose to support other’s choices, add a different statement, or to paraphrase a statement if none of the listed ideas seem just right, and each participant should have the opportunity to fully describe or explain their choice. A recorder for the group (who also participates in the process) should note common ideas and themes, and if possible in the time allotted, build group consensus on a single statement.
6. Return to the large group. Each group’s recorder should present for consideration common themes that surfaced, and/or a suggested consensus mission statement. These ideas can be compared against the five criteria: Is the statement clear? Concise? Outcome oriented? Robust? Inclusive?

**Activity 5.1b (cont.)**  
***Writing a Mission Statement***

7. The group should attempt to arrive at a preliminary mission statement that can be shared with the entire initiative, critiqued, and adapted as needed. You can use a statement framed like the one below to help organize your ideas, or use other phrasing that is more comfortable to you.

<p><b><i>The mission of our initiative is...</i></b> <i>(The essential why)</i></p>          <p><b><i>through (or by)...</i></b> <i>(The essential what)</i></p>
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***Carrying It Forward***

Reflect on the process of developing a mission statement. Was your group able to develop a clear and concise statement of what and why? Was your group able to bridge differences to reach consensus on the mission statement? What did the process tell you about the reactions you might expect from others in your initiative? How might you engage others outside of your group in refining your mission statement? How can you use this process and resulting mission statement in your organization or community?

## Activity 5.1c

### *Developing Measurable Objectives*

Time: 25 minutes

Goal: This activity will move participants from the concepts identified in Activity 5.1a and 5.1b to concrete language that describes how much of what the initiative is going to accomplish by when.

Steps:

1. Begin with your agreed-upon vision and mission statements, posted for all small groups to see, and use in developing objectives.
2. Divide into small groups to discuss specific changes or results that you hope to see related to your mission. Spend about three minutes on each of the following questions:
  - a. What measures of activities or outputs would help us assess whether the key activities or interventions are implemented?  
*e.g., We would assess the percentage of new parents who receive SIDS information before leaving the hospital.*
  - b. What changes in individual behaviors would we see if the effort is successful? What would people be doing differently?  
*e.g., Parents and other caregivers would be removing excess blankets and toys from infant sleep areas, and they would be placing babies on their backs when laying them down to sleep.*
  - c. What changes in the community, or community-level outcomes, would we see as a result of the group's efforts?  
*e.g., Lower rates of sudden infant deaths in our city; more infants growing to health childhood.*
3. In the large group, discuss the varied small group responses. Translate responses to the varied combinations of #2a/b/c into specific objectives, then discuss whether they fit the SMART+C Criteria. Make sure each objective is: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timed, and Challenging.
4. If there are objectives the group wishes to pursue that do not seem to be SMART+C, what information must be obtained, or action taken, to transform the objectives (or available data)? Are these realistic or should other objectives (or alternate measures) be used?

#### **Carrying It Forward**

Reflect on the process of developing objectives. Was it difficult or easy to state and agree upon objectives that fit the vision and mission? Why? Are the identified markers likely to be reasonably accurate, sensitive to the effort, and feasible to collect? Are the objectives you agreed upon actually achievable? Are they sufficiently challenging? When, how, and with whom will you use the objectives to advance the effort?

## Activity 5.2a A Strategies Mix

Time: 30 minutes

Goal: Participants will have the opportunity to identify a broad list of potential strategies that their initiative might undertake, consistent with its vision, mission, and objectives and reflecting relevant personal and environmental factors and known “best practices.”

Steps:

1. To help guide your thinking, refer to products generated in earlier modules:
  - a) Your table of candidate personal and environmental (risk and protective) factors
  - b) Your list of targets of change, agents of change, and potential community sectors
2. Form small groups of 4-5 members each who share a particular vision, mission, and objectives and list of candidate personal and environmental factors, targets and agents of change and sectors. Select a facilitator and a recorder.
3. Begin to think about specific targets (e.g., all children in the communities, families at particular risk) that could be reached by your initiative through specific sectors (e.g., schools, faith communities). Consider options that would address varied situations, and complete the following to the best of your ability (e.g., universal approaches for all people affected, targeted approaches for those with multiple risk factors).

Category of Target:	Specific Targets:	Sectors Through Which They Could Be Reached:
Individuals and Families	Universal: Targeted:	
Organizations and Sectors	Universal: Targeted:	
Whole Communities	Universal: Targeted:	
Broader System	Universal: Targeted:	

## **Module 5 Developing Strategic and Action Plans**

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4. Remaining within your small groups, look at the five generic types of behavior change strategies. These represent ways to create an environment to support behavior change related to the goal. It is important to note that providing information and enhancing skills is a weaker change approach while modifying policies and broader system is often more potent. However, the more powerful strategies can also be the most difficult to employ. With this in mind, generate at least two potential changes to be sought within each category, making an attempt to identify at least one program change (e.g., establish support programs for \_\_\_\_), policy change (e.g., provide tax incentives for \_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_), one practice change (e.g., service providers provide information about \_\_\_\_).

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## Activity 5.2a (cont.) A Strategies Mix

Types of Behavior Change Strategies:	Specific Changes to be Sought (In Program, Policy, or Practice)
a. Providing information and enhancing skills	1. 2.
b. Modifying access, barriers, and opportunities	1. 2.
c. Changing the consequences (incentives and disincentives)	1. 2.
d. Enhancing services and supports	1. 2.
e. Modifying policies and broader systems	1. 2.

5. Come back together as a large group, where each small group's recorder will share the lists of potential changes generated. These community and system changes can be considered by all group members against the five criteria of consistency, goodness of fit, resistance and barriers, whether those who are affected are reached, and whether they are likely to be effective in achieving results.
6. The group can attempt to prioritize the potential strategies, keeping in mind that a broad mix of strategy types, affecting varied levels and sectors, will be more likely to advance your mission. Unless it is clear that a brainstormed strategy is entirely not feasible or irrelevant, it should not be removed from the list entirely, maintaining a record of the full range of possibilities.

### **Carrying It Forward**

Reflect on the process of generating strategies. Did having a variety of strategies help you see beyond typical solutions? Are the possible interventions consistent with evidence of "what works"? How did listening to the ideas of others help you see what is important and possible? How might you use this process to identify varied strategies that increase the likelihood of success?

## **Activity 5.2b**

### **Surfacing and Selecting Community and System Changes**

Time: 30 minutes

Goal: This activity gives participants an opportunity to generate a list of potential community and system changes to be sought by the initiative, then assess them for their importance and feasibility.

Steps:

1. Divide the larger group into small groups of three to four participants each. Select a recorder. Give each small group one minute to agree on a single strategy (i.e., providing information and enhancing skills; modifying access, barriers and opportunities) from Activity 5.2a that is of interest to them, but does not duplicate the selection of another group. Each group reports out loud their agreed-upon selection.
2. Refer to the following matrix that illustrates the myriad of possibilities for community and system changes (i.e., new or modified programs, policies and practices) using different strategies for change in different sectors. Consider selecting best practices or intervention approaches for which there is evidence of effectiveness.
3. Brainstorm a list of possible specific changes in programs, policies and practices that could be sought by your initiative that represent different blocks within the matrix. Generate 5–7 specific changes, each representing some unique combination, and making sure to include at least two of each of the optional strategies for change and sectors.

# Activity 5.2b (cont.) Surfacing and Selecting Community and System Changes

**BRAINSTORMING FOR POTENTIAL COMMUNITY/ SYSTEMS CHANGES TO BE SOUGHT**

**SECTORS:**

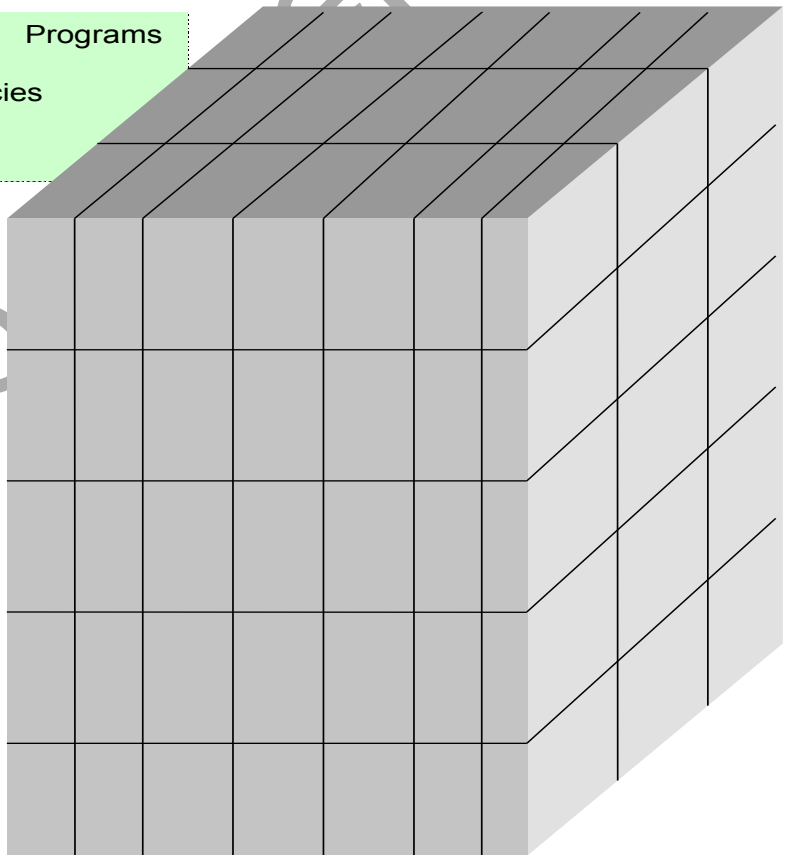
Businesses	Schools	Faith Communities	Health Organizations	Child / Youth Organizations	Government	Others
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**COMMUNITY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE CATEGORIES:**

Programs
Policies
Practices

**STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

Providing Information and Enhancing Skills
Modifying Access, Barriers and Opportunities
Changing Incentives and Disincentives
Enhancing Services and Support
Changing Policies and Broader Systems



## Activity 5.2b (cont.) Surfacing and Selecting Community and System Changes

4. The recorder will place ideas, as they are shared, on a table that shows how the selected change fits with the categorizations. After all ideas have been shared, the group can look at the options discussed to begin the conversation of importance and feasibility. Which of the ideas are important to the mission? How feasible are they to bring about (financially, politically, practically)? How likely are they to yield results? If time allows, make preliminary choices about which prioritized changes to seek.

You may use a table like this one to help organize your ideas:

**Mission or Outcome:** All Children Immunized

Strategy for Change	Sector	Illustrative Community/System Change to be Sought: New or Modified Program, Policy, or Practice
1. Providing information and enhancing skills	Business	Subsidize a phone reminder system for parents/guardians about their child's immunizations.
2. Modifying access, barriers, and opportunities	Government	Locate permanent sources of health care in underserved communities (e.g., city-funded neighborhood clinic)
3. Changing the consequences (incentives and disincentives)	Health Organizations	Provide incentives for clinic staff who work nights and weekends for mobile clinics
4. Enhancing services and support	Faith Communities	Utilize church bus for quarterly transportation of mothers and children to health care providers
5. Modifying policies and broader systems	Government	Establish local/state policies to create "healthy opportunity zones" that allow tax credits for establishing primary care facilities in underserved communities

5. All groups should now post the table of categorized community and system changes they've generated for others to see. Later, these ideas can be drafted into the initiative's action plan.

### **Carrying It Forward**

Reflect on the process used to identify community and system changes to be sought. How was it to think outside the standard "boxes"? Did group members see new ways of creating changes or interventions to help achieve the objectives? Were you able to consider ways to engage different sectors not already part of the group? How could this exercise be adapted or used in your community or initiative?

## **Activity 5.2c**

### ***Action Planning***

Time: 15 minutes

Goal: This activity allows participants to practice identifying action steps for one selected community or system change, including who will do what by when, and with what necessary resources and communications.

Steps:

1. Ask each participant to select one other person (or small group) with whom he or she can discuss his or her personal interest in moving forward one selected change in program, policy or practice.
2. Each pair (or small group) should identify two or more action steps on the action planning table shown on the next page, imagining together responses for all five columns. If possible, the participants should select an action step that they can personally commit to, whether as the primary actor or as a supporting cast member.
3. Record each pair's responses on a separate copy of the action planning table provided by the facilitator.
4. During the break, post all responses for others in the large group to view. These separate documents should later be consolidated into a single document that can be critiqued, added to and prioritized for action by all group members and collaborating partners, with agreed-upon assignments for specific individuals.

#### ***Carrying It Forward***

Reflect on the process of action planning for the one change in program, policy or practice you selected: Was it difficult to identify individuals to be "responsible" or "accountable" for the plan aspects you selected? Why? What would make it easier and more comfortable for people to contribute? How will your initiative or community use this process for planning and for engaging those who can contribute? How regularly should you revisit the plan to assure accountability? To consider adjustments? To celebrate accomplishments?

**Activity 5.2c (cont.)**  
**Action Planning**

<b>Action Step</b> (What will be done)	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b> (By whom)	<b>Date Completed</b> (By when)	<b>Resources Required</b> (At what costs)	<b>Communication/ Collaborators</b> (Who else should know about this)
1.				
2.				
3.				
Etc.				

## Activity 5.3

### *Identifying Consensus Builders*

Time: 15 minutes

Goal: This activity will help participants identify from among its key players identified in Activity 1.2.b those who are most significant in the development of consensus about vision and mission statements and plans, and outline a brief plan for engaging them in final revisions.

Steps:

1. Access the original product of Activity 1.2b, in which stakeholders, opinion-makers, community leaders, targets and agents of change and other constituents were identified.
2. Transfer the names of these people and organizations to a table like the one shown below.
3. As a large group, determine how fully these players:
  - a. Were involved in the development of your preliminary vision and mission statements and plans, and
  - b. Should be involved in developing consensus around those statements and plans.
4. Use designations: **1) high 2) medium 3) low and 4) not at all** to describe these levels, and indicate your decision on the chart on the next page. Your response to Step 3b above should reflect a possible change if the group was not involved as much as others in the development stages and is seen as important to your effort. For example, a group could have had only low input originally, but if only peripherally related, could still warrant only low involvement in the consensus stage.
5. If time allows, discuss how to best engage the groups ranked with a “high” rating on Step 3b in your ongoing process. Can there be a face-to-face meeting? Should there be a mailing or survey in which individuals are asked to react to your emerging plans? Should different groups with different agendas be addressed individually or together? What opposition or concerns can be anticipated?

#### **Carrying It Forward**

Reflect on the process of engaging key players in consensus building. Did your group do a good job of representing key players in the development of its strategic and action plans and of meeting the needs and priorities of these players? If not, can you anticipate some resistance? How can your organization best engage these players at this time? What will be the long-term benefits and risks of doing so? Of not doing so? How can your organization use this or a similar process as it moves forward?

**Activity 5.3 (cont.)**  
**Identifying Consensus Builders**

*1=High*

*2=Medium*

*3=Low*

*4=Not at all*

People and Organizations to be Engaged (Group or Individual)	Involvement in Development Stages of the Plan	Projected Involvement in Review/Consensus Stage	Considerations for Projected Involvement in Implementing the Plan
e.g., School Staff	2	3	Important Group!

## Lesson 5.5

### **Putting It All Together: Creating Strategic and Action Plans**

Now that you have learned the basics of strategic and action planning and have practiced putting together objectives and appropriate community and system changes, you are ready to create a plan of your own for your organization and community. This lesson can be used in several ways—as a hypothetical exercise, as an incomplete plan that you will further complete with others later, or as template for use by your organization or effort to create an action plan for your community. However you use it, it will help you clearly lay out what your organization is about, what you want to accomplish, and how you will go about doing it. So, let's get started!

1. **Convene a planning group** made up of individuals and organizations from the community affected by the problem or goal and others that are in a position to address it. **Identify additional partners and invite them** into your strategic planning process.
2. **Describe the vision for the community or initiative** (their dreams for how things should be).
  - a. In a workshop, retreat, or dialogue about the group's vision, capture:
    1. Dreams for the community or initiative (e.g., safe neighborhoods)
    2. What success would look like (e.g., healthy youth)
    3. How things ought to be (e.g., caring communities)
    4. What people and conditions would look like if things were consistent with that picture (e.g., health for all)
  - b. **Review the multiple vision statements.**

*List all vision statements proposed.*

- c. **Choose one or several vision statements with particular power to communicate**, and consider whether they are: 1) concise, 2) positive, 3) acceptable, and 4) a clear expression of why the group has come together.
  1. Choose visions that are embraced by the group
  2. (As appropriate) Select/edit the several that are particularly effective
  3. Check to see that everyone's voice is heard in the final selections

*Top three statements, and why.*

- d. **Select one statement** that concisely expresses why the group has come together and is acceptable to all members.

*What is your group's vision?*

3. **State the mission** (the what and why).
  - a. Develop (or refine) a mission statement that includes what is to be done and why it is to be done (e.g., "Creating caring communities through education and opportunities to serve.") To do so:
    1. Describe the essential "what" of the organization or initiative by reviewing its core functions and current programs and activities (e.g., training, advocacy, support, partnerships)
    2. Explain the essential "why" of the organization or initiative by reviewing the vision statements (e.g., safe neighborhoods, healthy children)
    3. Frame the mission statement as a single sentence that captures the common purpose (essential what and why) e.g., "Promoting healthy families (the why) through parent training and community support (the what)."

*What is your drafted mission statement?*

- b. **Review the mission statement**, making sure it is:

## Module 5 Developing Strategic and Action Plans

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1. Clear regarding what is to be done and why
2. Concise (often one sentence)
3. Outcome oriented
4. Robust - it leaves open a variety of possible means
5. Inclusive - reflects the voices of all people who are involved

*What is your final mission statement?*

### 4. State the objectives (how much of what the group hopes to accomplish by when).

#### a. To develop (or refine) objectives, clearly describe:

1. Benchmarks that would help us assess where we are now (baseline or pre-intervention) and where we would be if the initiative were successful (objectives).

What baseline markers could we access and how would we hope they would change if success were attained?

2. Behavioral objectives: the changes in behaviors the group would see if the efforts were successful (What would people be saying and doing differently?) (e.g., For preventing adolescent pregnancy- "By 2012, to increase by 40% the reported level of sexual abstinence and use of contraceptives for those who are sexually active among 12-15 year olds")
3. Population-level objectives: the changes in community-level indicators the group would see if the objectives were met (How would changes in individuals' behaviors add up to outcomes for all those in the community?) (e.g., For adolescent pregnancy-"By 2015, the estimated pregnancy rate among 12-15 year olds will be reduced by 30%").

#### b. Review the objectives to determine if they are: (SMART+ C)

1. Specific
2. Measurable (at least potentially)
3. Achievable
4. Relevant (to the mission)
5. Timed (date for attainment)
6. Challenging (requiring extraordinary effort)

#### c. Be flexible with deadlines in creating objectives. Defining objectives is time-consuming and may require second and third considerations for completeness.

### 5. Identify the strategies (how things will be accomplished).

#### a. To develop (or refine) strategies, clearly describe how the effort will bring about the mission and objectives. Identify for each:

1. The levels to be targeted (i.e., individuals, families and kinship groups, organizations and sectors, and/or broader systems.)

*What different levels of your problem or goal will you target?*

2. For each strategy, consider whether it will be universal (i.e., includes all of those who may be at risk or may benefit; e.g. all children and youth) or targeted (i.e., targets those who may be at greater risk for the problem; e.g., youth with a history of violence)
3. The personal and environmental factors to be addressed by the initiative
  - a. Personal factors may include: knowledge, beliefs, skills, education and training, experience, cultural norms and practices, social status, cognitive or physical abilities, gender, age, genetic predisposition
  - b. Environmental factors may include social support, available resources and services, barriers (including financial, physical, and communication), social approval, incentives and disincentives, time costs and delays, policies, environmental hazards, living conditions, poverty, and disparity in status

*What personal factors related to your vision and mission are common among those affected by the problem and those maintaining it?*

*What environmental factors related to your vision and mission are common within your targeted community?*

4. Those who can most benefit and contribute and how they can be reached or involved in the effort:
  - a. Targets of change: those who may be at particular risk or whose actions are critical for success. For your effort, who would this include?
  - b. Agents of change: those who may be in a position to contribute to the initiative, including targets of change. Who would this include?
  - c. Community sectors: through which sectors of the community (e.g., businesses, faith communities, schools) can targets and agents of change can be reached or involved?
5. Behavioral strategies to be used. Approaches may include:
  - a. Providing information and enhancing skills (e.g., conducting a social marketing campaign to educate people about the problem or goal and how to address it)
  - b. Modifying access, barriers, exposures, and opportunities (e.g., increasing availability of affordable childcare for those entering the work force)
  - c. Changing the consequences (e.g., using tax incentives to encourage housing developers to create green spaces and mixed income development)
  - d. Enhancing services and supports (e.g., increasing the number of public health centers that provide dental care)
  - e. Modifying policies and broader systems (e.g., changing business policies so that all employees can get time off to care for their sick children)
6. Review the strategies and comment on their appropriateness to the situation and sufficiency in addressing the mission and objectives. Review the strategies for:
  - a. Consistency with the overall vision, mission, and objectives
  - b. Goodness of fit with the resources and opportunities available
  - c. Anticipated resistance and barriers and how they can be minimized
  - d. Whether those who are affected are reached
  - e. Whether those who can contribute are involved

*Any changes?*

6. **Develop (or refine) the action plan by stating the specific community/system changes to be sought that will result in the accomplishment of your goals and objectives.**
  - a. For each strategy, identify specific community and system changes (i.e., new or modified programs, policies, and practices) to be sought.
    1. Providing Information and Enhancing Skills (e.g., provide media messages to discourage tobacco use)
    2. Modifying Access, Barriers, and Opportunities (e.g., prohibit vending machines that sell tobacco products)
    3. Changing the Consequences (incentives and disincentives) (e.g., provide smoking cessation classes)
    4. Enhancing Services and Support (e.g., provide smoking cessation classes)
    5. Modifying Policies and Broader Systems (e.g., change local ordinances to prohibit smoking in bars and restaurants)
  - b. After compiling a list of potential changes, review each candidate community or system change and rate it on two dimensions:
    1. Importance to the mission (1 = not at all, 5 = very); and
    2. Feasibility (1 = not at all, 5 = very).
  - c. Secure a formal decision from the group on what community or systems changes (intervention components and elements) will be sought (or implemented), with priority given to those changes with high importance and high feasibility.
7. **Identify action steps for one key community/system change in the action plan** (who is going to do what by when). Describe:
  - a. What specific change (e.g., in program or policy) or aspect of the intervention will occur?
  - b. Who will carry it out?

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- c. When the intervention will be implemented or how long it will be maintained?
- d. Resources (money and staff) needed/ available?
- e. Communication - who should know what about this?

8. **Evaluate critically the appropriateness of the action plan** (i.e., the activities or community/system changes to be implemented). Use the criteria that follow:
- a. Completeness - Are all the intended activities or community/system changes included in the plan? Are a wide variety of strategies and sectors utilized?
  - b. Clarity - Is it apparent what will be done, and who will do what by when, to bring about change?
  - c. Sufficiency - If all that is proposed were accomplished, would it meet the group's mission and objectives? If not, what additional changes need to be planned and implemented?
  - d. Resources (money and staff) needed/ available?
  - e. Currency - Does the action plan reflect the current work and situation?
  - f. Flexibility - As the plan unfolds, is it flexible enough to respond to new opportunities, barriers, and changes in the community? Can it be modified as objectives are accomplished or goals adjusted?

*Modify your proposed community and system changes and action plans based on your answers (if necessary).*

9. **Indicate how you will use the strategic and action plans.** Consider the following potential uses:
- a. Communicate the initiative's purpose to others.
    1. Indicate who should know about the group's vision, mission, objectives, strategic and action plans.
    2. Describe how the initiative will communicate this new framing of what it does and why.
  - b. Check the organization's core functions.
    1. Indicate who should know about the group's vision, mission, objectives, and the core functions of the organization represented (e.g., advocacy, training).
    2. What adjustments might be appropriate to the vision, mission, and action plan?
  - c. Find common ground and anticipate potential conflict.
    1. Identify potential disagreements about ends and means that the group is facing.
    2. Indicate how you might use this new framing of the problem or goal to build consensus.
  - d. Plan how to detect or discern opportunity.
    1. Identify the criteria that will be used to judge an "opportunity". These might include qualities such as:
      - a. Consistency with the vision
      - b. Consistency with the mission
      - c. Contribution to the action plan
    2. In light of the vision, mission, and action plan, pinpoint new or emerging opportunities for the community initiative or organization.

*What steps will you take to better detect or discern new or emerging opportunities?*

- e. Identify potential partners
  1. Indicate who is out there who can help the group achieve its vision and mission. List organizations that share this common work.
  2. In light of the vision, mission, and action plan, identify some potential partners that the community initiative or organization should collaborate with.

*Who or what organizations in your community would be good partners, based on your vision and mission?*

10. **Begin implementing action planning steps.** Choose the order by considering:
- a. Which changes need to be completed before others can? Some changes may require other changes and relationships to be established.
  - b. Which changes are easier or quicker to bring about? Could completing them give the organization's membership a sense of success and provide the organization with much needed media exposure?
  - c. Which changes are the most important or key to the initiative's objectives?

- d. Which changes would inspire and encourage participants and build credibility within the community?

*Using the list from Step 6, prioritize implementation of potential changes considering the previous considerations (e.g., ease or quickness of accomplishing, importance to meeting objectives, etc.)*

11. **Review the action plan at regular intervals.** As your coalition grows and the objectives are accomplished or conditions change, members may revise the plan.

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## **Glossary**

**Action plan:** Describes in detail exactly how strategies will be implemented to accomplish an initiative's objectives (e.g., who will do what, by when, and with what resources).

**Agents:** Those who are in a position to bring about change; may also include targets of change.

**Behavioral objectives:** Objectives related to changing the behaviors of people (what they are doing and saying) and the products (or results) of their behaviors.

**Benchmarks:** Goal points by which progress can be measured.

**Candidate factors:** Personal and environmental risk factors that could be chosen to target in your group's effort.

**Collaborators:** Groups or people with whom you may work to achieve the objectives in your strategic plan (e.g., people from faith communities, health organizations, government, schools, businesses, neighborhoods).

**Community and system changes:** New or modified programs (e.g., an after-school program), policies (e.g., passing an ordinance to assure access to nutritional food for all school children), and practices (e.g., providing needed childhood immunizations as part of regular clinic visits) related to the group's mission.

**Community-level outcome objectives:** This refers to a marker of success for a community improvement effort at the level of the whole community (e.g., a city, county, neighborhood, school district). Indicators vary depending on the mission; for instance they might include: a) for Preventing Infant Mortality, the number of infants who die per 1000 in a state; b) for Substance Abuse Prevention, single-nighttime vehicle crashes or arrest rates for drinking and driving; or c) for Improving Education, the percentage of youth in the school district who graduate from high school or mean scores on standardized achievement tests for those at different grade levels.

**Conditions:** The situation or circumstances in which you are working.

**Consensus:** The entire group agrees upon a certain decision or course of action.

**Levels:** Refer to the tier of society targeted by the initiative (e.g., individuals, families, organizations and sectors, whole communities, or the broader system).

**Markers:** Reference points by which progress can be measured.

**Measurable:** Objectives that can be assessed quantitatively (i.e., with numbers, rather than with words).

**Mission:** Describes *what* the group is going to do, and *why* it's going to do it. Although similar to vision statements, mission statements are more concrete and "action-oriented."

**Objectives:** Objectives refer to specific measurable results for the broad goals of the initiative; they generally lay out how much of what will be accomplished by when.

**Outcome:** The end result of an action.

**Process objectives:** Refer to the implementation of activities necessary to achieve other objectives (e.g., number of people who receive training).

**Resistance and barriers:** People or situations that oppose your efforts.

**Sector:** A piece of a society (e.g., business, faith-based organizations, healthcare, schools, government, etc.) through which potential targets and agents of change can be reached.

**Stakeholder:** A person or group with an interest in an issue or proposed action.

**Strategies:** Explain how the initiative will reach its objectives.

**Targets:** Those who may be at particular risk for an issue and are the prioritized group at which an effort is aimed.

**Vision:** Communicates what an initiative believes are the ideal conditions for its community; what success would look like.

**VMOA:** Refers to a strategic planning process, which results in a Vision, a Mission, Objectives, Strategies, and an Action Plan