



Part One: What is Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning is a process that results in decisions and actions to guide what your program is, what it does, and why it does it (Bryson, 2004). Strategic planning is a practical process to help you adapt products, services, and activities to the needs of the population your program serves. The benefits of strategic planning include improved program performance, use of resources, understanding of program context, decision making, stakeholder communication, and political support for your program (Bryson, 2004; Office for Victims of Crime).



An Overview of the Process

Through your application for DASH funding, you already initiated the planning of your school health program. Through the strategic planning process, you will expand on initial planning by using data to systematically examine where your program is now, where it could be, and the best path for getting there. The product will be a strategic plan that outlines how your program will achieve its goals during the five-year funding period. This plan will inform the content of your annual workplans, including activities, staff resources, and evaluation measures necessary to accomplish program goal(s) for a particular year. In general, your program will use the same strategic plan throughout the cooperative agreement. However, a strategic plan is a living document, and you may need to adjust it as your program unfolds and as indicated by evaluation findings.

Strategic planning includes six steps:

- 1.** Prepare
- 2.** Assess
- 3.** Create
- 4.** Communicate
- 5.** Implement
- 6.** Evaluate

The following is a brief summary of each step. Part 3 of this kit explains each step in more detail.

PROGRAM STRATEGIC PLANNING KIT EVALUATION for school health programs

STEP 1: PREPARE

The Prepare step lays a foundation for the strategic planning process by establishing the purposes of the plan; identifying stakeholders; determining what information, roles, and resources are necessary for the process; and developing the timeline for it. The products of the Prepare step are the formation of a strategic planning workgroup and the identification of data needed to inform the strategic planning process.

STEP 2: ASSESS

The Assess step is the process through which the strategic planning workgroup reviews and analyzes program-related data so the program can allocate resources and services in the most strategic way. In the Assess step you determine where the program currently is. The product of the Assess step is an analysis of program Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOTs) based on the data review.

STEP 3: CREATE

In the Create step, you will develop and write the five-year strategic plan. The strategic planning workgroup reviews the SWOT analysis and uses the findings to identify and prioritize strategies that the program intends to implement during the five-year cooperative agreement. You will then revise your program logic model and align your annual workplan with the prioritized strategies and the timeline to implement them. The main product of the Create step is the written strategic plan. We suggest that you include these sections in your strategic plan: (1) executive summary; (2) stakeholder list; (3) data sources list;

(4) SWOT analysis; (5) program strategies; (6) revised five-year program logic model; (7) aligned annual workplan; (8) communication process; (9) implementation process (including an implementation timeline); and (10) evaluation process. (Part 2 of this kit describes the strategic plan in more detail.)

After you create the strategic plan, the next steps are to communicate, implement, and evaluate it.

STEP 4: COMMUNICATE

The Communicate step involves sharing information about the strategic plan in ways that make the plan understandable and useful to stakeholders. The products of the Communicate step are the communication messages and products you disseminate each year about your strategic plan, including its creation, implementation, and evaluation.

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STEP 5: IMPLEMENT

In the Implement step, the strategies in your strategic plan are put into action as outlined in the strategic plan implementation timeline. The product of the Implement step is the completion of activities in annual workplans, as reflected in the achievement of SMART objectives. You document implementation of your strategic plan in program progress reports, through the *Indicators for School Health Programs*, and the School Level Impact Measures (SLIMs).

STEP 6: EVALUATE

In the Evaluate step, you evaluate your implementation of the strategic plan and your program activities. Your program develops evaluation questions and collects data to inform the annual workplan for the coming year. Evaluation data are used to monitor how the five-year strategic plan is progressing. The products of the Evaluate step are evaluation findings, summaries of how the strategic plan is progressing, and description of changes to program activities based on evaluation findings.

