

Six Steps in Strategic Planning

STEP 1: PREPARE

In the Prepare step, you lay a foundation for strategic planning by determining the purposes of the plan; identifying stakeholders to include in the process (stakeholders are individuals or organizations that are invested in the program and the results of program activities, and that have a stake in what will be done with the results); determining what information, roles, and resources are necessary for the process; and developing the timeline for it. You also identify sources for data that describe the internal status and external environment of your program. At the end of the Prepare step, you should have: (1) established the purpose of your strategic plan, (2) formed a workgroup, and (3) identified the data you need to inform the planning process.

To prepare for the strategic planning process, the program coordinator and program staff should meet and discuss the following questions:

- What is the **purpose** of our strategic planning efforts?
- What is the **timeline** for the strategic planning process? When will we hold meetings? When do we need to complete the plan?
- What **resources** do we have for the strategic planning process (e.g., meeting space, computers you use to take minutes, or food)? What resources do we lack, and how can we obtain them?

- What **internal and external data** do we have that can inform the process?



You can use the **Data Sources Matrix** tool to help you with this task. You may have already gathered some of these data in preparation for your application for DASH funding.

Internal Data

Internal data describe the current status of your DASH-funded program and how it operates.



A major source of internal data is the **DASH Program Inventory**. This inventory provides a snapshot of what your program currently is doing related to four program components: (1) program management and staffing, (2) program planning and monitoring, (3) professional development and technical

At the end of the PREPARE step, you should have:

- ✓ Established the purpose of your strategic plan,
- ✓ Formed a strategic planning workgroup, and
- ✓ Identified the data you need to inform the strategic planning process.

PROGRAM STRATEGIC PLANNING KIT EVALUATION for school health programs

assistance, and (4) partnerships. Other internal data sources include technical reviews from your DASH Project Officer, data you report in your *Indicators for School Health Programs*, program evaluation data, program descriptions, and client satisfaction questionnaires.

External Data

External data describe the population that your program serves and the environment (social, epidemiologic, educational, administrative, policy) in which your DASH-funded program operates. Sources for external data include your state health department (vital statistics and epidemiological data), the U.S. census, policy documents, your state or local department of education, external partner questionnaires, and your YRBS and School Health Profiles.

Next, identify the individuals and organizations that are stakeholders in your program's strategic plan.



You can use the **Identifying Stakeholders Worksheet** to help you with this task. Stakeholders include:

- Program participants—those that the program serves or affects, such as youth, parents and guardians, school faculty and staff, and community members;
- Strategic plan implementers—those who will drive the program operations described in the strategic plan, such as program coordinators, program staff, education and health agency administrators, members of the training cadre, contractors, and volunteers;
- Intended users of the strategic plan—those partners who can influence or help to implement strategies identified in your strategic plan, including external and internal partners. External partners are agencies, organizations, and groups outside your own agency with which you collaborate or associate to further the goals of your project and may include non-governmental organizations, health departments, institutions of higher education, and community groups. You may have already identified external partners in your application for DASH funding. Internal partners are related departments, divisions, or regional units and may include cross-division school health committees.

PROGRAM STRATEGIC PLANNING KIT EVALUATION for school health programs

After you identify the stakeholders in your program's strategic plan, choose the stakeholders who should participate in the planning process. A general guideline is to involve at least one representative from each of the three stakeholder groups (program participants, strategic plan implementers, and users). Other factors to consider include whether the person has specialized knowledge or experience, is needed for plan credibility, or is necessary for plan implementation. Also consider who might be most critical of the strategic plan and whether there is a benefit to including them in the planning process. Note that some stakeholders may be involved in all aspects of the strategic plan, including its creation, communication, implementation, and evaluation, while other stakeholders may be less involved, depending on how their interests relate to the program.

Invite the stakeholders to participate in a strategic planning workgroup. Your invitation should explain the purpose of strategic planning, the overall program goal, expectations of participants, the planning timeline, and the number of meetings. Also explain to stakeholders why their participation is important and the benefits of strategic planning to the program as well as their own interests.

Now that you have formed a strategic planning workgroup, hold the first strategic planning meeting.

At this meeting:

- Review the purpose of the strategic planning process and expected timeline. Ask workgroup members questions such as:
 - What do they perceive as the purpose of the DASH-funded program and what are their concerns about it?
 - What do they know about strategic planning?
 - What are their expectations about participating in the strategic planning process, and what are their concerns, with regard to participating?
- Determine who in the workgroup could serve in the following roles:
 - **Convener**—the individual who schedules strategic planning meetings, sets the agenda, sends notification and reminders to participants, opens the meetings, holds participants accountable, and reports progress.
 - **Facilitator**—the individual who monitors the progress of strategic planning meetings, asks questions, and provides pieces of information to move participants forward in the process.

PROGRAM STRATEGIC PLANNING KIT EVALUATION for school health programs

- **Writer**—the individual who synthesizes ideas generated in meetings and writes each section of the strategic plan document. Ideally, the writer should draft each section soon after the relevant meeting and distribute it to the strategic planning workgroup for editing. Different individuals can divide the writing for the different sections of the plan.
- **Advisor** (optional)—Individuals outside of the strategic planning workgroup with experience or expertise in strategic planning who observe the process and provide advice on discussions and products. An outside consultant from a private company or university could serve this role, but it is optional because your workgroup may not have ready access to these individuals or need their expertise.
- **Reviewer**—Individuals outside of the strategic planning workgroup who can review and edit the strategic plan and provide feedback.
 - Review the list of internal and external data sources that will inform the strategic planning process, and ask workgroup members to identify other information that the workgroup might be able to use.