

Divisional Strategic Planning— The Basics

A. Why have a strategic plan?

Having no plan is like going hiking in the woods without a compass. Without careful planning of where you are and where you want to go in the future it will be more difficult to reach an ideal outcome. Lack of planning can lead to unhappiness and disillusionment of faculty, and a lack of cohesion in the Division. A strategic plan is a document that covers a period of up to five years in the future and outlines the step-by-step process the Division plans to make toward completing its mission and achieving its goals. The plan should i) identify specific strategies for attaining each goal, ii) identify who is responsible or accountable for implementing each strategy, iii) provide the desired timeframe for each goal, and iv) outline a mechanism for regular evaluation of the plan. Successful strategic planning is a fluid and inclusive process. A strategic plan should be sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing conditions within the Department. Guidelines outlined below were developed from the references listed at the end for more detailed information.

Benefits of successful planning can include:

- Improved cultural climate (collaboration, trust, morale)
- Expanded awareness of external environment
- Process improvement
- More effective resource allocation
- Development of leadership roles within the Division
- Provide rationale for long-range budget planning that leads to strategic change rather than incremental change

B. What is involved in creating a strategic plan?

Ideally, the division chief is the leader in developing the strategic plan and is responsible for assembling a diverse planning committee that would meet over several months to develop the plan. If funds permit, a consultant can be involved. A qualified consultant is a master of the process, but the Division members are the experts for the content. There may be added value using a consultant who has experience as a staff or faculty member at an academic institution or school of medicine, and can provide a balanced perspective of a Division's multiple missions (education, clinical excellence, research, etc.).

Basic steps outlining the planning process include:

- Convene a planning committee
- External and internal environment assessments
- Collective data review-gap analysis
- Meetings to review components of the proposed plan
- Identify goals and milestones (short term and annual)
- Establishing metrics of success
- Periodic evaluation of progress

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C. What are the components of a strategic plan?

To produce a plan that will be effective in guiding Division's strategic investments, the planning process must be well designed and effectively managed. The vision statement [desired future state], mission statement [purpose] and values are the foundation, which provide direction for the plan and the rationale for the prioritization and selection of goals.

- **Vision Statement**—Vision statements contain the specific characteristics or features that will define the division in its desired future state. The vision statement is used to motivate and inspire, and is understood to be achievable.
- **Mission Statement**—The mission statement explains in one or two sentences what the division seeks to accomplish, the purpose, and what result should be expected.
- **Values**—Values explain what the Division stands for and how it intends to conduct its activities.
- **Resources and Budget allocation**—Are these a one-time allotment or annually renewable
- **Strategic Goals**—Define the short term and the long term goals of the plan
- **Tactics for implementation**
- **Measures of Success**—metrics and targets that define success for each goal.
- **Accountability and evaluation process**

OVERVIEW OF DIVISION STRATEGIC PLAN

Values Statement

Mission Statement

Values

Strategic Goal 1	Strategic Goal 2	Strategic Goal 3
Time Frame	Time Frame	Time Frame
Resources & Budget	Resources & Budget	Resources & Budget
Action A	Action A	Action A
Action B	Action B	Action B
Action C	Action C	Action C
Success metrics	Success metrics	Success metrics
Responsible Member	Responsible Member	Responsible Member

Repeated evaluation of plan

D. What is the strategic planning process?

Outlined below are commonly used techniques to create the elements described above.

1. **Environmental Scan**—A systematic evaluation of the Division and the environment in which it functions. Members of the committee are designated to collect information that will provide the Division's planners with a common understanding of trends and relevant issues for the future. The scan is used to identify the broad strategic objectives that will become a guideline for the action plan. There are two major components to the scan—internal and external.

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a. Internal—To succeed, the strategic planning process should anticipate involving participants from other closely interacting units (GME committee, hospital administration etc.) and must communicate regularly across institution. Data can be gathered through:

- Stakeholder interviews
- Needs assessment
- Constituent surveys

Ranking goals by the percentages of respondents rating a given goal as important or somewhat important can assist with prioritization.

b. External—Divisions do not operate in isolation. Committee members should be assigned to gather relevant data regarding external trends and policies that will impact the future vision of the Division.

What other institutional plans already exist and need to be included in the development of the strategic plan? How will regional and discipline-specific accreditation reports be addressed through the planning process?

- National and local demographics
- Market share
- Institutional initiative
- Changes in GME requirements
- Changes in governmental regulation
- New institutional policies
- Diversity of faculty, staff and trainees
- Enrollments in curricula supported by the Division
- Certification requirements
- Available and qualified labor pools
- Competition from other services providers
- Prevalence of outsourcing or privatization
- Desirability of key geographic areas

2. SWOT Analysis—SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) is used as a framework for the environmental scan. The information can be segregated into the four areas. The procedure allows the committee to support the gap analysis with additional information about what actions need to be implemented.

Strengths	Opportunities
Many patients in the area needing rheumatology services	Hiring more MDs and ancillary staff could make our hospital the largest local rheumatology provider
Weaknesses	Threats
Insufficient ancillary staff and MDs to provide all the services needed	Another local hospital has more resources to hire

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3. Gap Analysis—Assesses the “gap” between the institution’s current status and the specific features of the vision. It also identifies what actions need to be taken to close the gap. Using the vision statement and the results of the SWOT analysis, the committee can focus on the gaps between the two. In order to complete a Gap Analysis, the committee should align the specific details of both the SWOT and the Vision Statement. The pertinent elements in this analysis are identification of:

- Gaps between current conditions and the vision
- Issues that occur in more than one gap or are linked to other issues
- Any current condition issues or elements of the vision that do not have a counterpart in the other

4. Identify Resources—The estimated capital, one-time and ongoing resources required for implementing each strategy. To succeed, the strategic planning process must include the means by which its resource estimates and priorities become part of the Division’s long-range resource forecasts and annual budgets. The strategic process will need to be linked to the annual budget and fiscal forecast for the Division. However other non-monetary resources such as space, or equipment may be needed for a specific plan.

5. Establish the Goals to achieve in the next 3-5 years

6. Define measures of success—Goals and objectives should have specific metrics or targets associated with them to guide implementation and measure progress.

7. Devise an implementation and action plan—Identify the operational methods to achieve these goals. The implementation plan needs to be directive, clear, and documented. The implementation of a strategic plan depends on the division’s ability to translate the conceptual plan into operational action. It is necessary to document who is responsible for implementing an action, a date for expected completion, and what metrics will be used to assess success. An implementation template should address the following for each objective:

- The action to be taken
- The outcomes expected or desired
- The metrics for success
- The strategy and method for evaluation;
- The individuals and entities responsible and accountable
- The timeframe, including the scheduled time to start and complete
- The resources required to accomplish each task.

8. Assignment of ownership and accountability—Responsibility for each action should optimally be assigned to a single individual even if a group is assigned to complete the action. This provides clarity and does not allow members of the task group to assume that another member will be accountable.

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9. Periodic evaluation of progress—The division's management must, in the end, embrace assignment of ownership and accountability. To succeed, the strategic plan and the division's leadership must clearly assign and communicate divisional and individual responsibility for the successful execution and implementation of each goal and strategy.

- Continually check back to determine if the goals are being met, at least biannually
- Communicate progress regularly to stakeholders
- Celebrate success

E. Additional Resources/References

1—Basic Overview:

<https://onstrategyhq.com/resources/strategic-planning-process-basics/>

2—A More Detailed Description of the Process:

<https://onstrategyhq.com/resources/strategic-planning-process-basics/>

3—Specifics of Academic Strategic Planning:

<http://bit.ly/2xkXpcF>

4—AAMC—This website provides tools for academic strategic planning:

<http://bit.ly/2DLgDfA>