VIA Tool: Strategic Plan Checklist

Like everyone else, campus community organizers often dream about goals they would like to accomplish, such as an end to high risk drinking and sexual assault; every student is successful and healthy, unintended pregnancies don't happen; enough food for everyone; peace in our lifetime. These are just a few of many people's visions for our community. Unfortunately, like many individual dreams, we think these objectives are too lofty and unattainable to ever be realized.

But, in fact, realizing these dreams is possible. Look, for example, at our global success in eradicating small pox, reducing cigarette smoking by over 50% since 1965 or how far we have come since the 1950s in the United States towards reaching racial and gender equality. As Henry David Thoreau said over a century ago, "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; there is where they should be. Now, put foundations under them."

Building foundations for your campus community dreams is what VVMOSA, the strategic planning process that is the focus of Standard 1.1 is all about. It's about groups of people deciding together what they want to accomplish, and how they are going to get there.

1. An Overview of Strategic Planning or "VVMOSA" (Values, Vision, Mission, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Plans)

___Values (the underlying guidelines for our work)
___Vision (the dream)
___Mission (what and why)
___Data and Trends (assessments and evaluations)
___Top five to 10 health issues
___SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats)
___Objectives (how much of what by whom)
___Strategies (how)
___Action plans (who will do what by when)
___You understand when to use VVMOSA, the strategic planning process
2. Proclaim Your Dream: Developing Values, Vision and Mission Statements

___You have shared your understanding of values, vision and mission statements with members of your organization
___You understand what is important to people in your community
___You have decided on the general focus (topic and scope) of your organization
___You have developed your values, vision and mission statements
___You have obtained consensus on your values, vision and mission statements
___You have decided how to use your values, vision and mission statements

3. Creating Objectives

___Your organization understands what objectives are, and when you should develop them
___Your organization understands that objectives should be "SMART +C"
___You have defined and reaffirmed your vision and mission statements
___You have determined the changes to be made
___You have collected baseline data on the issues to be addressed
___You have decided what is realistic for your organization to accomplish
___You have set objectives for the organization or initiative
___You have reviewed the objectives your organization has created

4. Developing Successful Strategies: Planning to Win

*Develop successful strategies:*
___You can form a planning group to develop strategies

*Find potential members:*
___Campus Community leaders
___Members of other local organizations
___Those affected by the issue or problem
___Representatives of local ethnic and cultural groups
Create a supportive environment:
___A safe and comfortable building, neighborhood site
___Create an open forum for all to participate

Determine/review targets and agents of change:
___Be inclusive of those experiences, at risk for, and contributing to the issue
___Determine risk and protective factors affecting the issue
___Review vision, mission, and objectives

Brainstorm the best strategies:
___Determine potential obstacles
___Strategize to get around obstacles
___Identify how agents of change will help
___Decide when strategies will affect targets of change
___Determine if you will work on repairing or preventing problems
___Ensure strategies decrease risk factors, and increase protective factors and operate on multiple levels of the system
___Make sure strategies will address entire problem or issue

Do the strategies meet the criteria?
___Give overall direction
___Fit resources and opportunities
___Minimize resistance and barriers
___Reach those affected
___Advance the mission

5. Developing an Action Plan

Getting started:
___You can determine what people and sectors of the community should be involved in finding solutions
___You have convened a planning group in your community to design the action plan
Invite these people to help prepare an action plan:
___ Influential people from all groups affected
___ People directly involved in the problem or issue
___ Members of grassroots organizations
___ Members of ethnic and cultural groups of the community
___ Different sectors of the campus community: media/community relations/religious
groups/student affairs partners/faculty/staff/student organizations/government

Be sure you are able to:
___ Review vision, mission, objectives, strategies, targets and agents of change, community
  sectors to be involved
___ Develop action plan with steps for all changes to be sought
___ Review action plan: Is it complete, clear, current?
___ Follow through
___ Keep members informed about progress
___ Keep track of what (and how well) you've done
___ Celebrate accomplishments

Tips for successful planning meetings:
___ Be inclusive
___ Create a safe, comfortable environment
___ Prepare for possible conflict
___ Be efficient
___ Record what happens
___ Communicate the products of planning (distribute the plan after review by the group)
___ Support and encourage group members

For each action or change to be accomplished, list:
___ What action or change will occur?
___ Who will carry it out?
___ By when (for how long)?
___ What resources are needed?
___ Communication: who should know what?
Does the action plan meet the criteria?
___Complete
___Clear
___Current

To finish up:
___Review your completed action plan carefully
___Follow through!
___Keep everyone informed about what's going on
___Keep track of what (and how well) we've done

Keep members accountable:
___Regular phone call check-ins
___Reports on progress at meetings
___Celebrate accomplishments

6. Obtaining Feedback from Constituents: What Changes are Important and Feasible?
___You know what it means to obtain feedback from constituents
___You decided whether to use formal or informal feedback

If using formal feedback:
___You have decided whether to use personal interviews, phone surveys, written surveys and questionnaires
___You have determined how to obtain feedback from constituents
___You know what I want to know
___You know who has already done this
___You know who I want to ask
___You decided if you want to obtain information in an open or closed manner
___You know how many people you would like to ask
___You know how you want to ask people
___You have decided how you'd like to conduct your survey: written or oral
___You have decided on the format of your questions: open or closed
You have removed all possibility of bias from your survey
You know you should thank respondents ahead of time, let them know how you'll use any information that you gather, and thank them again afterwards
You understand you shouldn't ask questions you're not going to use

7. Identifying Action Steps in Bringing About Community and System Change

You know what action steps are
You understand why you should identify action steps
You know when you should identify action steps
You know how to identify action steps
Determine what your group, as a whole and individually, is really good at
Brainstorm different, specific ways that these strengths can be used to carry out the changes that you have decided upon
Consider the possible barriers to implementing your proposed changes
Consider possible ways to remove these barriers
With all of the above information in mind, brainstorm different ways to go about implementing the proposed changes in each sector that you have chosen
Make sure each action step includes:
  • What will occur
  • How much, or to what extent, these actions will occur
  • Who will carry out these changes
  • When these changes will take place, and for how long
  • What resources (such as money and staff) are needed to carry out these changes
Determine a final list of action steps for each community sector from the ideas that came from your brainstorming
Pat yourself on the back for getting all your planning done, take a deep breath, and go do what you've said you are going to!

Reference