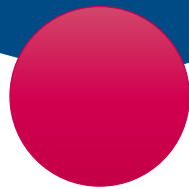


Strategic Planning: Setting the Course for the Agency

Board Training Facilitation Guide



ROMA Principles & Practices for Community Action Agency Boards

Created through the Partnership's Organizational Standards Center of Excellence and
funded by the Office of Community Services



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Strategic Planning -- Module Description

This training can be after Assessment, or after Creating Local Theory of Change. This really is a brief introduction to concepts of “planning” and “strategic planning” to identify the elements of the planning process that are included in the Organizational Standards.

This guide is designed to help a facilitator consider the content in relationship to the information needs of the Board. For example, this module would be helpful to the Board as they are considering their next Strategic Planning process or when they are doing their annual review of their current Strategic Plan. It can also be useful if any of the Organizational Standards related to planning were unmet.

NOTE: there is a full day workshop power point and facilitation guide for additional support in training your agency about Strategic Planning best practices. Find this material at the Partnership web site.

Module Learning Objectives:

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Describe the value for the agency of a well defined Planning process
- Understand the parts of the Planning Process, and what role the Board should play
- Acknowledge that the Board is responsible for assuring the Plan is connected to the identified needs and is supported by appropriate fiscal and other resources
- Identify actions the board must take to assure the Strategic Plan and the Community Action Plan are done properly
- Recognize that review of the plan over the next year is a responsibility of the Board.

Material

- [*ROMA Cycle, National Theory of Change, Brief list of the Organizational Standards*](#)
- *Agency's current Strategic Plan and Community Action Plan should be available.*

Be sure to have sign-in sheet or other reference to those present (as in the board roll call) so you can document the training each Board member has received.

Learner Centered Feedback should be collected at the end of each session for evaluation

Topic	Time	Slide number
Introduction to the training	<i>1 min</i>	1-3
Why plan? Kinds of plans.	<i>7 minutes</i>	4 - 8
<i>Board Responsibilities</i>	<i>2 minutes</i>	<i>9 - 14</i>
What goes into the Plan?	8 minutes	15-20
Take Action	2 minutes	21

Slides & Facilitator Notes

Slide 1

Strategic Planning
for Boards

Setting the Course for the Agency

A Video Series for CAA Board Members

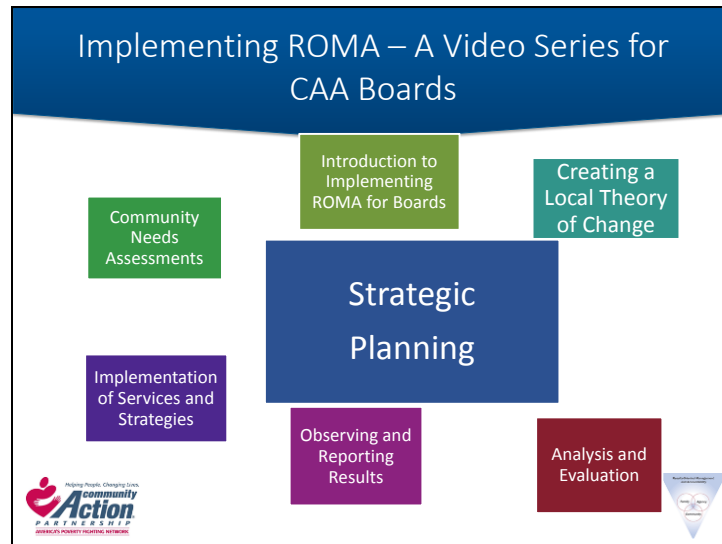
Helping People. Changing Lives.
community Action
PARTNERSHIP
AMERICA'S POVERTY FIGHTING NETWORK

Results-Driven Management
and Accountability

Family Agency Community

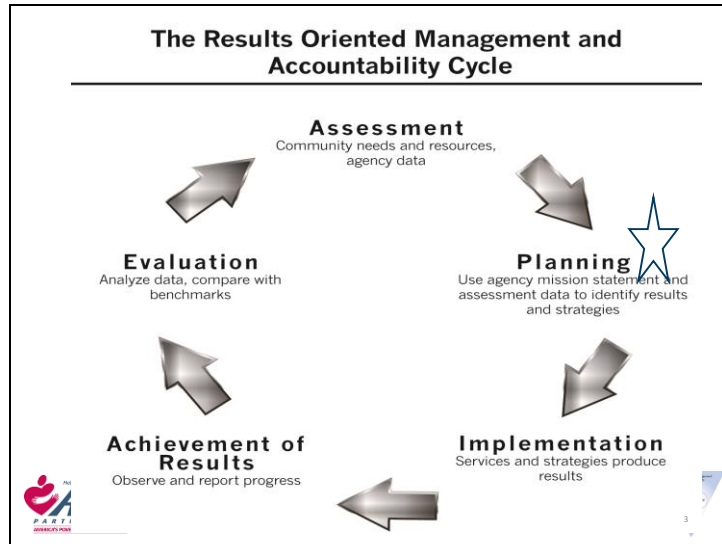
Objectives of this video will be to help the board identify:

- what they need to know,
- how do they find out,
- what does it all mean,



This presentation is a part of a series that is intended for Community Action Agency Board Members interested in deeper understanding of

- How to help your Community Action Agency increase its capacity and its results.
- How to meet and exceed Organizational Standards




The next phase of the ROMA Cycle we will explore is that of Planning.

From Organizational Standards CATEGORY SIX: Strategic Planning

Establishing the vision for a Community Action Agency is a big task and setting the course to reach it through strategic planning is serious business. CSBG eligible entities take on this task by looking both at internal functioning and at the community’s needs. An efficient organization knows where it is headed, how the board and staff fit into that future, and how it will measure its success in achieving what it has set out to do. This agency-wide process is board-led and ongoing. A “living, breathing” strategic plan with measurable outcomes is the goal, rather than a plan that gets written but sits on a shelf and stagnates. Often set with an ambitious vision, strategic plans set the tone for the staff and board and are a key leadership and management tool for the organization.

What is Planning?

- Planning is “Thinking before the action takes place”
- It’s a process of consideration of what you want to accomplish and organizing activities to make it happen
- It’s a way to assure that the CAA is providing services and strategies that are addressing the local needs that were identified in the Community Needs Assessment process



The slide features three logos at the bottom. On the left is the 'Action Partnership' logo with the tagline 'Making Health Changes 2015'. In the center is a circular graphic with the text 'TIME TO PLAN' and a hand pointing to the 'PLAN' part. On the right is a small triangular logo with a person's face.

During the process, the board will consider many things



- the results of the assessments identifying and prioritizing needs,
- the resources available (or possible),
- what they believe their mission is (their local Theory of Change)

They will use this information to identify agency goals and how they plan to achieve them.

Why plan?

- Provides an opportunity for an agency or a community to **step away from day to day operations** and consider a vision of the future.
- Helps you identify **where you want to be** in 3-5 years.
- Allows you to consider **how your agency will address** its anti-poverty mission.
- **Unifies agency** staff (from all programs) and board members around a common vision and common outcome goals.

Other purposes?



As human beings we are intentional about the way we make decisions. The human mind likes to make connections and plans. Think about all the things you have to do in both personal and professional life. You are constantly making choices about which goals you want to reach, changing priorities to meet demands, etc. But you are working from a general “life plan” to get through each day.

In today’s culture, it is commonly accepted that agencies need to focus on results. The ability of the CAA or its clients to achieve results and how well those are achieved (performance) is the basis for accountability in Community Action and other federally funded programs.

Once the agency understands their mission and has a clear and comprehensive view of the community in which they are going to operate, the next step is to create a plan that identifies the results that the agency will work toward.

Quote from **1998 CSBG reauthorization** to reinforce the necessity to plan.

While creating a strategic plan is the right way for an organization to manage effectively and efficiently, it is also a legislative mandate that all agencies produce a “community action plan” which includes needs assessments, and also an assessment of agency resources. The purpose of the assessments and the plan is to identify the improvements or results it will achieve

Different Kinds of Plans

- The agency's planning process can involve a number of different kinds of plans
- Some of these are done at different times of the year
 - **Community Action Plan**
 - **Proposals for Funding (beyond CSBG)**
 - **Agency Wide Strategic Plan**

The Community Action Plan is often focused on the use of the CSBG Funds and the funds that are leveraged for anti-poverty purposes.



Other proposals or applications are submitted to other funding sources – so the agency can receive funds for specific programs (such as Head Start, services for Senior Citizens, Substance Abuse prevention). These “proposals” are a kind of plan too.

The Org Standards specifically cite a special kind of plan – and agency wide “strategic plan” which can help to establish the “whole agency” approach that we talked about in the Local Theory of Change discussion.

Some things to consider: all the plans should connect in some way to the needs identified in the CNA? Do you find reference to the needs identified in the CAN in your planning documents? Are the plans addressing family level needs and community level needs? Does the Strategic Plan include actions to meet agency level needs?

What is the Purpose of *Strategic Planning?*

- A **Strategic Plan** is the document that results from the Board's **agency wide planning process**.
 - It includes goals, actions, and the means of measuring the achievement of (or progress towards) the goals.
- The Strategic Plan sets out the **elements needed** for effective and efficient work that everyone in the agency and all of its partners understand.





The addition of the concept of “strategic” to the planning process means that it is comprehensive and that consideration has been given to the established priorities the agency is going to address.

Developing this kind of plan strengthens the agency’s operations and ensures understanding among employees, partners and the Board.

Agency Wide Strategic Plan

- Some strategic plans focus exclusively on agency development and puts family and community planning in other documents.
- It is important, however, for the agency wide plan to include some reference to the Community Needs Assessment and what the agency's direction will be in the coming year(s) to meet the identified needs.



In most cases, a Strategic Plan is an “agency wide” or comprehensive plan. Because the Board sets the policy for *all of the activities of the agency*, the agency-wide strategic plan is a good place to include some guidance related to the Board’s assumptions about what will happen for families and communities they serve.



Most of the work of “action planning” and development of how the Board polices shall be carried out will fall to the staff of the agency. But the Board, or a committee of the Board, should be involved in setting priorities and providing direction.

IF THE AGENCY HAS DEVELOPED A LOCAL THEORY OF CHANGE, THAT CAN HELP WITH DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGIC PLAN AS YOU HAVE ALREADY IDENTIFIED AGENCY WIDE GOALS AND THOUGHT ABOUT HOW THESE ALL SHOULD WORK TOGETHER.

If the agency has not developed a local theory of change, you will have to include a discussion about vision, mission, values in this part of the training because the Strategic Plan depends on the agency’s understanding of who they are.

Board Roles and Responsibilities

- The board is required to **approve the plan.**
—specifically the “agency-wide strategic plan” or “comparable planning document”
- The board is responsible for assuring that the agency wide strategic plan addresses reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and/or empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient.



Refer to Organizational Standards

Standard 6.1 -- The organization (or department) has an agency-wide strategic plan (or comparable planning document) in place that has been approved by the governing board within the past 5 years (or in the case of Public agencies - that has been reviewed and accepted by the tripartite board/advisory body within the past 5 years.)

Standard 6.2 -- The approved strategic plan, or comparable planning document, addresses reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and/or empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient.

Another Way to Think About Roles

When developing and managing a plan

- The **Board is responsible** for
 - Mission, Goals, and the allocation of resources to results
 - Appraising progress and achievement
- **Management is accountable** for
 - Objectives, action steps and supporting the budget
 - Demonstrating effective performance (measuring and reporting)

Drucker Foundation Self-Assessment Tool

The Drucker Foundation divides responsibilities into these categories – what the Board is responsible for and what the management staff are responsible for.

Organizing a Planning Committee



- Establishing a committee structure
- Select a chair person
 - *Maybe a member of the board*
- Develop a time line to identify committee meeting times, date of a possible Board “Retreat” or other planning events, etc.
- Discuss if others will be invited to the committee meetings to provide input:
 - ROMA Trainer/Implementer, Program managers, Consultant
 - Other stakeholders: front-line staff, customers, key partners



There is a longer workshop about conducting Strategic Planning. But there are a few things that the Board should know about the process of creating the agency-wide Strategic Plan.

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: you may want to cut out some of the next few slides to shorten the presentation. Please do NOT cut slides 15, 17 or 19 as they cover essential points of the planning process. And of course 20 and 21 are the summary slides.



This slide shows the first step of planning – that of organizing a committee to do the work.

In some cases the individuals under the fourth bullet will be a part of the Planning Committee, and in some cases they will be invited to a meeting to provide specific input but will not be a part of the Committee

For instance a staff person who is a certified ROMA Trainer or Implementer could provide overview of ROMA to the committee on the front end of the planning process and/or could provide a review of the document when it is in final draft form , but not be engaged in the entire process.

Review Last Year's Plan and Progress

- Make sure you understand what you planned to do last year.
 - What progress did you make toward meeting last year's goals?
 - What goals are still relevant and should be included in the current year's goals?



An important thing for the Board to help direct is the consideration of last year's plan and progress as the Planning committee gets started. The Board can assure that they don't try to create this year's plan in a vacuum – that they use what happened last year as a starting point.

According to the org standards the Board is getting regular updates on progress:


Standard 6.5 - The governing board (or advisory body) has received an update(s) on progress meeting the goals of the strategic plan (or comparable planning document) within the past 12 months.

Use those updates to consider: if goals were not yet met, consider why progress did not happen as projected when the plan was adopted.

If they were met, is there any work yet to do? Can this work lead to something related?

Use Input from Customer Satisfaction Surveys

- The data gathered from customers related to their satisfaction with the agency and the services they received, can be used to put what you learned into your plan
 - *How can you improve agency capacity, performance, accountability or any other issues raised in the data you received from your customers?*





The slide features four logos at the bottom. From left to right: the 'Action Partnership' logo with the tagline 'Making Health Change 2020'; a graphic with the text 'WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK' in colorful speech bubbles; the word 'FEEDBACK' in a bold, black, sans-serif font with radiating lines; and a small, light blue triangular logo with a white face-like shape inside.

Standard 6.4 –

Customer satisfaction data and customer input, collected as part of the community assessment, is included in the strategic planning process, or comparable planning process.

Do you have sufficient information about:

- Where do low-income individuals and families live in the agency's service area?
- Where are the areas of highest need in the agency's service area?
- Where are there gaps in resources?
- Are there barriers to access in specific areas of the community?
- What is the demographic breakdown of population in poverty by age?
- Are there gaps in services for specific populations (e.g. child care/early education, seniors?)
- Did our agency data showing that we served the population in need? Serve the population you thought you'd serve Not serving a population, despite data telling us there is a high need?





There may be questions that have been raised by the review of the Community Needs Assessment. At the beginning of the Planning Process, there is time to gather any other information you may need.

Many times, this is when the Board is asked to do a SWOT analysis to understand the context of the opportunities and threats developing over the next year.

You should already have done a review of the agency mission and have a good understanding of what the board assumes about poverty and its role in addressing poverty. But the SWOT activity (described elsewhere) can be done at this time.

Fiscal Issues : Agency Level Needs

- Of course all of your plans will **depend on your resources** to accomplish them.
- Fiscal data should be available to help Board Members **consider the feasibility** of providing the proposed services and strategies.
 - The agency wide budget should be **realistic** in relationship with the strategic plan.
- Output data (**cost of providing services**) should be connected to outcomes . What is the **cost of producing results?**



When we talk about fiscal data, that would include financial reports, audit reports (findings, etc.), and budgets for each program and the whole agency.

These Organizational Standards related to fiscal data should be considered during the planning process:

Standard 8.1 -- The Organization's annual audit (or audited financial statements) is completed by a Certified Public Accountant on time in accordance with Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Uniform Administration Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirement (if applicable) and/or State audit threshold requirements.

Standard 8.2 -- All findings from the prior year's annual audit have been assessed by the organization and addressed where the governing board has deemed it appropriate.

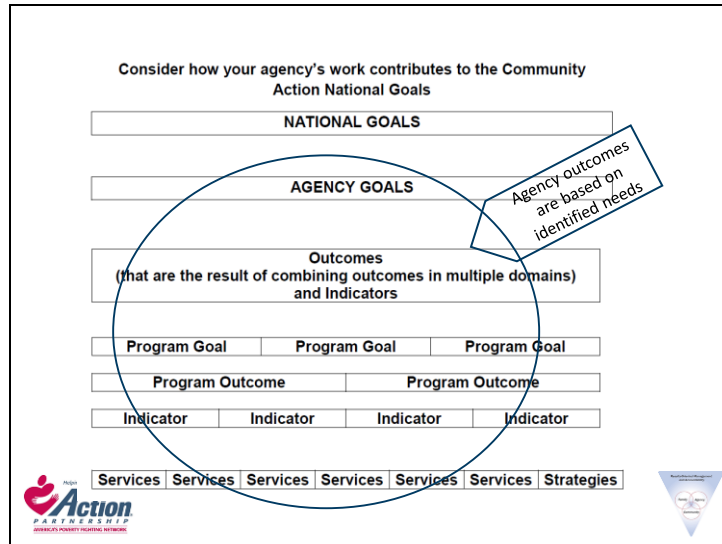
Standard 8.7 -- The governing board receives financial reports at each regular meeting that include the following:

1. Organization-wide report on revenue and expenditures that compares budget to actual, categorized by program; and
2. Balance sheet/statement of financial position.

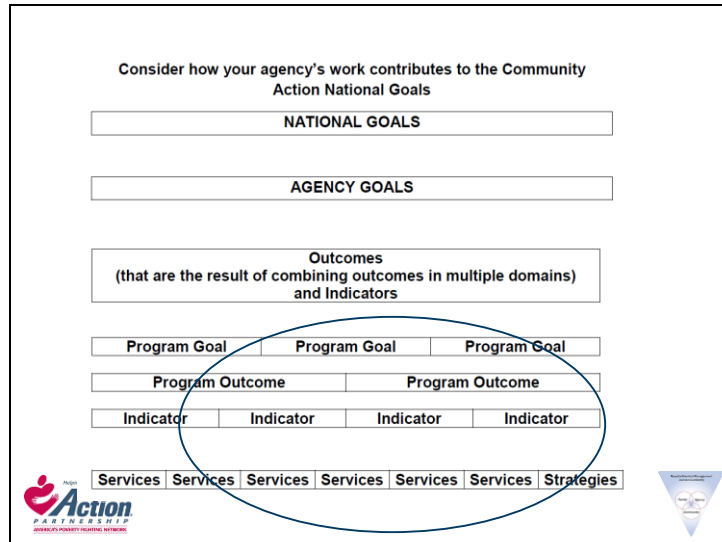
Or for Public agencies: The tripartite board/advisory body receives financial reports at each regular meeting, for those program(s) the body advises, as allowed by local government procedure.

Standard 8.9: The governing board annually approves an organization-wide budget.

Or for Public agencies: The tripartite board/advisory body has input as allowed by local governmental procedure into the CSBG budget process.



When we think about a local Theory of Change and an Agency-wide Strategic Plan, we are looking at how all the program goals work together to produce the “big picture” impact of your agency.





When we think about logic models making connections among the elements of a program, we are looking at the part of this chart that is circled.

Program level logic models may be included in the Strategic Plan – some include them as addendums – or they can be referenced but not included.

Remember that the Community Action Plan will be developed to address specific CSBG requirements – and in some communities it is in the CAP that the program logic models are included.

The Plan's Structure

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Introduction: Purpose, Process, Stakeholders
- III. Organize the content so requirements are clearly found: Organizational Standards, ROMA
- IV. Assessment Summary
 - a. Mission, vision, values
 - b. High Priority Needs (CNA)
 - c. SWOT
- I. Agency Goals and Outcomes
- II. Indicators, Services, Strategies, Actions



The Board might be involved in creating a format for the final Plan document.

This slide shows one way of organizing the Plan.

But agencies use different ways to organize the information in the Plan.



Some ideas are to organize by:

- Community Action National Goals
- Domains (identified in the National TOC or other)
- Level of need (family, community, agency)
- Geographic area
- Target populations to be served
- Agency departments or programs

Action Steps can be included or this can be the next thing that gets created once the Plan is approved by the Board and sent to the staff for implementation.

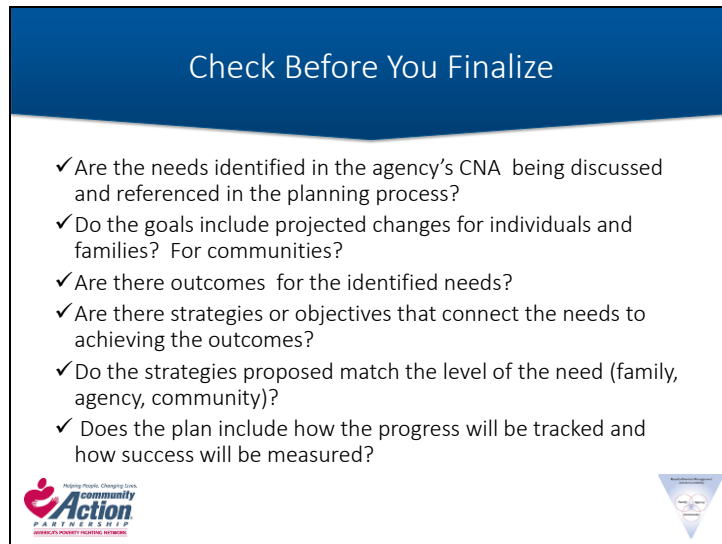
Developing Action Plans

- Each strategy will typically have its own Action Plan
- Action plans are developed by the staff responsible for implementing the plan
- Action plans should include
 - List of action steps
 - Resources required
 - Staff responsible
 - Timeline
 - Outcomes
 - Method of tracking



If you elect to do the Action Plan as part of Strategic Planning, this should happen prior to the plan being finalized.



Alternately, this can be done after the Strategic Plan is handed off to be implemented.



The slide features a blue header with the text "Check Before You Finalize". Below the header is a white box containing a list of six checkmarks. At the bottom left of the white box is the "Action Partnership" logo, and at the bottom right is a small blue triangle logo.

Check Before You Finalize

- ✓ Are the needs identified in the agency's CNA being discussed and referenced in the planning process?
- ✓ Do the goals include projected changes for individuals and families? For communities?
- ✓ Are there outcomes for the identified needs?
- ✓ Are there strategies or objectives that connect the needs to achieving the outcomes?
- ✓ Do the strategies proposed match the level of the need (family, agency, community)?
- ✓ Does the plan include how the progress will be tracked and how success will be measured?

Standard 6.3

The approved strategic plan, or comparable planning document, contains family, agency, and/or community goals.

Your plan is the document where you make connections. Needs, services, outcomes
An agency strategic plan that is based solely on agency goals would meet standard 6.3 but would not meet standard 6.2 without some clear narrative that makes the connection.

The last bullet sometimes raises concern. Some planners feel that the “big” strategic plan should not get into details related to actual delivery of service. We agree, but suggest that some understanding about how you will know you are successful should be included.



Consider this two sentence excerpt from a plan:

“We are dedicated to helping our customers secure and retain employment as a step toward economic security. We will follow up with our customers who are placed in employment at both a 30 day and a 6 month interval to determine if they are retaining employment.”

This does not include the methodology you will use to measure the success, but it says that you will do follow up. It doesn't leave the question of “will you be accountable for your work?” up in the air.

Taking Action

- **Approve the Strategic Plan** and record the Board action
- **Identify Action Steps, that will include assignments** to staff (and maybe also to Board members) who will be implementing the services and strategies in the plan
- **Make any recommendations** necessary regarding how the Plan will be used to inform the Implementation Phase
- **Establish a time table for Review** of the plan throughout the next year



The next section is about implementing services for individuals and families and strategies for agency and community.

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