

# STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE

## Principles of Strategic Governance

1. Clear *mission*<sup>1</sup>, *vision* and *values* statements guide leaders and staff.
2. The *strategic plan* is the driving force for agendas, board discussions and the focus of *successive leaders*.
3. The goals and strategies are translated into a more precise (tactical) *business* or *action plan* by staff.
4. *Performance measures* are the basis for gauging progress.
5. The *chief elected officer* charges *committees* with work from the plan. Committees have access to the board through a director or staff liaison if they are chaired by other than board members. *The board of directors does not do committee work at the board table.*
6. *When non-strategic discussions arise*, a member of the board or staff is empowered to query the relevance of the discussion.
7. *Board members remain responsible to each other* – taking pride in their follow-through and achievements while serving in the leadership role.
8. The *strategic plan* is revisited annually, and updated every three to five years.



<sup>1</sup> Statement of purpose.



**Strategic Board** – A board that has clear vision and acts accordingly --- based upon the organization’s mission, vision, values, goals and strategies.

**Strategic Plan** - The document identifying the organization’s direction and goals for 3 to 5 years; serving as a roadmap for successive leaders. Planning participants should be visionary - yet practical - to best position the organization. A plan is reviewed annually and updated in full at periodic leadership retreats.

**Mission Statement** – The statement of purpose; aligned with bylaws and articles. High marketing value to identify the organization, who it serves and what it offers. Some of the best mission statements fit on the back of a business card as a single, easy to memorize, sentence.

**Vision Statement** - Identifies the desired future for the organization and the community it serves. For example, “ABC is the primary organization advocating for members; providing the resources and offering the education essential for prosperity.”

**Values Statement** –Beliefs that guide leadership and staff. Often organized as bulleted phrases or key words to communicate an organization’s standards. For instance: diversity, member-driven, environmental sensitivity, transparency and integrity.

**Goals** - The broad direction and overarching themes of work set by the board; usually 3 to 7 goals in a plan. (Synonymous with objectives.) Make them **S.M.A.R.T**: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely.

**Strategies** – The initiatives, projects and ideas, that when carried out, will achieve the stated goals. (Strategies may identify **performance measures**; i.e. a ten percent net growth in membership.)

**Business or Action Plan** – A more detailed staff/committee document to advance the strategic plan in the coming year. The action plan breaks down the board’s broad goals into an accountable, measurable, timeline of work.

**Committees** – Committees are a means for the board to delegate work to volunteers. Often the number of committees is aligned with the number of major goals. Committees do not have a “life of their own” but receive explicit charges by the chairman of the board. Committees should have a link to the board for reporting --- via a staff or director *liaison*. Committees seldom have authority of make commitments on behalf of the organization. The resulting creative work of a committee is property of the organization. The board should not conduct nor revisit committee work at the board meeting.

**Standing** – A permanent committee, authorized by the bylaws, to perform ongoing functions for the organization. Most bylaws allow the board, or board chairman, to appoint committees as needed.

**Ad Hoc** – Latin for "this purpose." An ad hoc committee is created with a unique and specific assignment or task --- and is disbanded after it has studied and reported on the matter.

**Task Force** - A task force is a temporary committee formed to work on a single task or activity; synonymous with ad hoc committee.

**Agenda** – A carefully crafted schedule for board meetings to advance the goals and strategies of the strategic plan. A *strategic board* is empowered to bring sidebar or inappropriate conversations back to the task at hand, as identified on the agenda. Board discussions should be visionary, relevant and stay focused on governance, policy/position development, fiduciary responsibility and the future of the organization and the community it represents.