

Planning

Strategic plan

Strategic planning is a critical role for boards. It involves looking ahead, making decisions and taking appropriate action to avoid pitfalls and bring about improvements in an organization. This process results in a strategic plan for the organization that often covers a 2 to 5 year period. Both the process and the plan provide direction and goals for the organization but also have a direct impact on programs and services, the number and role of committees, resources needed, governance and staff structures.

Two key points to remember about strategic planning is that the process is as important as the plan and that the planning process is a continuous one.

The benefits of strategic planning are:

1. Clearly establishes realistic goals and objectives consistent with the mission, in a defined time frame, within the organization's capacity for implementation.
2. Provides a basis for communicating the organization's goals and objectives to the organization's stakeholders (especially members).
3. Ensures the most effective and efficient use is made of the organization's resources by focusing the resources on the key priorities.
4. Provides benchmarks from which progress can be measured and establishes a mechanism for informed change when needed.
5. Brings together everyone's best and most reasoned efforts in order to build and maintain a consensus about where an organization is going.

Operating Plan

While the strategic plan sets the direction of the organization, the operating plan lays out the activities required to fulfill the BIA's mission and strategic objectives as outlined in the strategic plan.

The operating plan should be structured to follow the strategic objectives and details the activities that staff and volunteers will implement to achieve the desired outcomes. The operating plan details specifics about 'who' and 'how' and 'when' and includes measurement criteria. The operating plan should also be accompanied by a detailed budget that outlines the financial objectives for each activity.