

Landcare Notes

Landcare Note 2.2
September 2010

Strategic planning

Strategic planning helps you set out what you are trying to achieve and how to get there. It gives clarity and a sense of direction that will help you be focused and effective. It can also help you stay motivated, communicate what you are doing and attract new members and resources.

What is strategic planning?

Strategic planning is the process you will use to determine a vision for what you want to achieve and the paths you will take to achieve that goal.

The plan then provides a framework for your action plans as required (usually annually). For Landcare groups, the strategic plan usually sets goals and pathways for the next three to five years or beyond.

In preparing a strategic plan you need to start with an accurate picture of the current situation and a general view of where you want to go – what would success look like? Then you work out how to get there.

A strategic plan is more visionary and directional; an action plan (see Landcare Note 2.3: *Action planning*) is short-term, focused and measurable. The action plans will guide your short term steps to get to where you want to go in your overall picture (strategic plan) for your area.

How to do it

A good strategic plan must be realistic and attainable. Most are developed around three basic steps:

- *Situation* – clarify the current situation and what limitations or problems you face. These could include social (e.g. low membership, only reaching certain landholder types), financial (e.g. small amount of cash in the bank) and

environmental (e.g. loss of natural vegetation, impact of weeds or rabbits)

- *Goals and targets* – describe the goals you want to achieve in the next three to five years (e.g. increased membership, increased funding from the private sector, reduced impact of specific weed species), and what will be your measure of success (e.g. membership increased to 50 families)
- *Path/action* – work out ways you can achieve these targets.

Understanding the situation and asking the right questions

There are a number of ways to assess the current situation, define your goals and work out how to get there. Answering the following questions may help:

1. What is our story?
2. What is our current vision and purpose?
3. What do we believe in? What are we committed to?
4. What do we do at present?
5. What situation are we in? What things impact on us?
6. What are our strengths and weaknesses? What are the possibilities?
7. What are the major challenges?
8. What directions are foreseeable outside our organisation?
9. What are the priorities for our region? Who are we working with?
10. If we were to move in new directions, what would be different?
11. What do we need to do to go that way?
12. How will we do it? Who should we involve in our plan?

Your plan should map out the path(s) you need to take to reach your goal or vision. It

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should also remain flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances and respond to opportunities, if necessary, to achieve the final outcome.

A good strategic plan will serve as a framework for making decisions or securing support and approval, and as a basis for more detailed action planning.

This will also help you explain your goals to others so they are more motivated and involved, will help you to benchmark and monitor your performance and will stimulate change to create a building block for the next plan.

Getting help

There is a wide range of books, software and consultants available to help with strategic planning but most come at a cost.

Many resources can be found through the internet – try searching for strategic planning processes or strategic planning tools/guides.

Your local Landcare coordinator and Landcare network may be able to help. You could check out a free on-line strategic planning guide such as Planware which is offered by Invest-Tech Ltd. It's geared for business but has forms and ideas appropriate for Landcare groups.

Further references

Victorian Landcare Gateway:
www.landcarevic.net.au

Invest-Tech Ltd. (2007) *Planware* – free on-line strategic planner:
www.planware.org/strategicplan.htm

Management Help – Free Management Library: integrated online library for non-profit and for-profit organisations – Strategic Planning:
www.managementhelp.org/plan_dec/str_plan/str_plan.htm

Our Community website – *Strategic Planning – Mapping Your Group's Future*:
www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleId=1306

Landcare Group Resources:
www.landcareonline.com/page.asp?sID=18

Olsen, Erica (2007) – *Strategic Planning For Dummies*, Wiley Publishing.

This is one example of the many books on strategic planning available in good bookstores.

Related Landcare Notes

This Landcare Note is one of a series. These notes provide an excellent guide for the ongoing operation of your group.

Landcare Note 2.3: *Action planning*

Acknowledgements

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