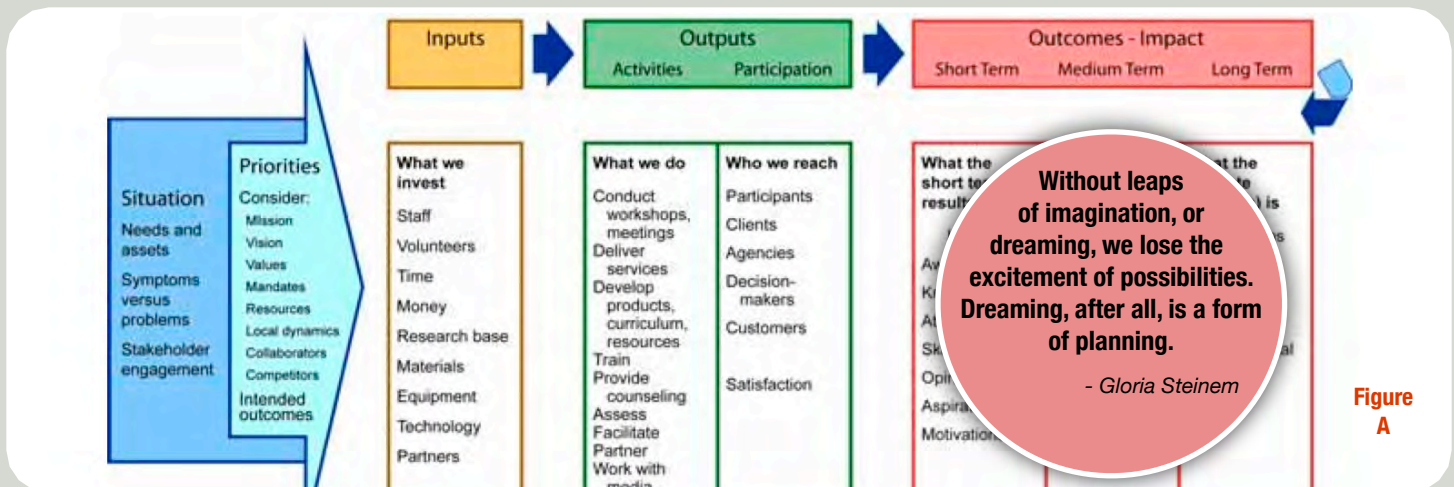


PLAN



SUSTAINABILITY IN OUR SECTOR BEGINS WITH A PLAN

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe." A. France

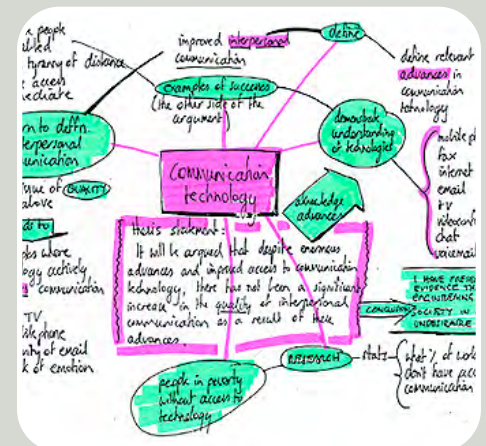
Planning makes the overwhelming achievable. When you set out to change the world, you need to set your sights pretty high. In public interest work it's important to be visionary and ambitious; and it's just as important to be realistic and practical. Good planning allows you to do both. It makes it possible to take a big idea, and break it into bite-sized pieces. Good planning has you set inspiring goals, and then identify the manageable steps you can take to move toward your dreams.

Planning keeps people involved and enthusiastic. Your planning process should be as inclusive as possible. If you involve everyone in the process, they will be ready to share responsibility for the work. A good plan will increase the energy and enthusiasm of your board, volunteers and members. When people can see how they fit into the overall organizational plan, they

will know their contribution is valued. Morale stays high when people understand their roles and can anticipate what's coming next. The benchmarks (or objectives) in a good plan give you the tools to measure your progress along the way—critical for maintaining momentum.

Planning also increases resources. A good plan will keep you focused on your priorities, saving time, energy and money. At the same time, a solid plan will make it easier to attract new resources and support. Few things impress potential donors more than a good plan that shows you know where you're headed and how you will get there.

Many social profits don't take time for planning—there's too much "real work" to do. These groups struggle for years, burning-out volunteers and staff, never reaching their goals. Good planning takes time, but it will pay off.



Mind Mapping

Drawing on right/left brain modalities, mind-mapping or webbing helps us show how different categories of information relate to one another. They provide structure for ideas and facts and a flexible framework for organizing and prioritizing information.

LOGIC MODELS

A logic model is a visual representation of how an organization does its work and is the first and most essential piece of the sustainability puzzle. It includes the theory and assumptions underlying a program and links both short- and long-term outcomes with program activities/processes and the theoretical assumptions/principles guiding its development.

Logic models convey an organization's fundamental purpose, why it is important, how it will operate, and what results can be expected.

A logic model aids strategic and program planning efforts; provides a powerful tool for ensuring effective communications with a variety of stakeholders (particularly funders who are always interested in strategy and accountability); creates the basic framework for effective evaluation and assessment; and provides a benchmark for monitoring a program's continuous improvement and learning community achievements.

See an Example in Figure A on Page 1

GETTING STARTED

When people start talking about planning, lots of confusing terms get used: goals, objectives, benchmarks, milestones, etc. Different people use different terms. Here are some definitions that may help:

A **VISION** is an ideal or dream. Your vision might be a society where no one is without legal representation. Visions are lofty and not likely to be realized in your lifetime.

A **GOAL** is a translation of your vision into something that you are working toward over the long haul: a day when every law student and lawyer will dedicate time to serving the needs of the poor. Goals are usually achievable, but they should be a stretch. Most groups should set goals for a specific time-frame.

OBJECTIVES are a lot like goals, but they're smaller.

They are the steps that you will take to progress toward your goals. An objective might be to launch a campaign for curricula reform that includes public service graduation requirements.

Given your group's mission, what is your vision of success? What goals are you working toward? You should think about the long term, but setting one or two-year goals will make planning more realistic.

Once you've agreed on a few goals for the year (not many groups can tackle more than 2 or 3 at once), it's time to set some objectives. It might help to think of objectives as milestones or benchmarks. If your one-year goal is curricula reform, an objective might be to enlist the support of one or two influential faculty members. Objectives are only meaningful if they are specific, measurable and practical. Don't set objectives that you can't meet. Objectives help you measure progress along the way. Achieving meaningful objectives gives everyone a chance to see when progress is made. When you complete an objective, take a moment to congratul-

ate yourself and all who helped; a brief pause to acknowledge your success will give you the energy needed to tackle the next objective.

A good plan builds on your strengths and expands your group's ability to do even more. As you set your goals and objectives, it's a good idea to know how far you have to travel, and what kind of help you'll have along the way. What are your strengths and assets? What resources do you have? What special talents or skills can your members or friends contribute? Does your group have good relationships in the community? Do you have dozens of enthusiastic

members, eager to volunteer for the next campaign? Do you have access to community leaders because of your strong programs? When you map out your plan there will be road-blocks along the way. Know your own strengths, and be prepared

to draw on them when you build your strategy.

Most importantly, start planning now! Don't be scared to begin. Remember the old proverb: "A good plan today is better than the hope of a perfect plan tomorrow."



QUICK TIP SERIES

Published monthly by Common Ground Consulting LLC, this brief is part of a series designed to support and enhance the critical work of social profit organizations.

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