

Strategic Planning

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Strategic Planning

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What's the Difference?

While the mission statement outlines where the library is at present and the vision statement outlines where library wants to be, the strategic priorities, goals, and objectives outline the work that needs to be done to move from the mission to the vision.

The choice of language in a Strategic Plan is determined by organizational culture and preference. Libraries often choose to use terms such as priorities, directions, objectives, goals, aims, outcomes, etc. The key is to be consistent with the application, definition, and understanding of the terminology used throughout the Strategic Plan.

Further Resources

- Understanding and Developing Organizational Culture - SHRM
- Organizational Culture - BDC
- The Leader's Guide to Corporate Culture - Harvard Business Review

Strategic Priorities

After collectively summarizing the library's current reality through a mission statement and imagining a compelling future through a vision statement, the steering committee is in a position to develop strategic priorities that will form the basis of the strategic plan.

The easiest way to think about identifying the best strategic priorities is to focus on the gaps that exist between where the library is now and where it wants to be. Strategic priorities indicate the general direction the organization will take to move from its current state toward its future vision. Priorities should be focused on the future, be inspirational, and reflect key topics or themes for the library moving forward.

Example: "Create versatile spaces that met the ever-changing interests and needs of our diverse and growing population." (The Blue Mountains Public Library)

Strategic Goals

A Strategic Goal is a milestone designed to provide reliable information about progress towards achieving the strategic priority and, ultimately, progress towards the library's future vision. Strategic Goals contextualize the priorities and outline the framework for achieving them, without going into too much detail on the variety of ways in which they may be pursued.

Common Strategic Goals include:

- Improve access to library services
- Advance public service through innovation
- Raise the profile of the library in the community
- Expand programs and service to targeted populations

Example: "Provide spaces to gather, learn, explore, work and connect." (The Blue Mountains Public Library)

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objectives are the milestones to progress towards achieving the Strategic Goals (and therefore the Strategic Priorities).

An objective should:

1. Make something about the library different;
2. Represent a worthy expenditure of library resources;
3. Address the gap between where the library is right now and where the library wants to be;
4. Serve to either improve library service or build the library's capacity to do so;
5. Be conveyed in descriptive, outcome-based language that makes the achievement of it recognizable and measurable.

Strategic Objectives are closely linked to the work plans or action plans that library staff use to implement and track the Strategic Plan upon completion.

Example: "Redesign the Children's area." (The Blue Mountains Public Library)

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