

## Chapter 3

# Strategic Planning

---



*“Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about the future now...failing to plan is planning to fail.”*

Alan Lakein

# What is strategic planning?

Strategic planning...

- creates vision.
- encourages conceptual thinking
- provides direction for the entire coalition of participating agencies
- is critical for successful organizational development

A well thought-out strategic plan will lay the foundation for subsequent topics: designing the model, safety and security, health services, client services, volunteers, and getting buy-in.

## Major steps of planning



- History gathering
- Visioning
- Identifying blocks and barriers
- Determining the direction
- Formulating implementation plans

A good strategic plan can act as a framework for decision making. It can be used to secure support and provide a basis for more detailed planning. Strategic plans help to describe an organization in order to Inform, Motivate, and Involve Others.

## What strategic planning IS NOT

- A Strategic Plan is NOT a Business Plan.
- A Strategic Plan is NOT an Operational Plan.

## Participatory Strategic Planning



Successfully designing and implementing a comprehensive wrap-around service delivery center requires uniting a multidisciplinary collaboration of all stakeholders who, experience has shown, have varying viewpoints, differing philosophies, and competing priorities. Strategic planning for a Family Justice Center must be done at the beginning of the process and it must be inclusive of all these viewpoints, philosophies, and competing priorities. Everything must be out in the open so that consensus can emerge as a plan develops.

## Strategic Planning will help...



- Create a shared vision of what is possible for your Center
- Help people to “dream big” and not settle for a very mediocre set of goals
- Generate new ideas and buy-in
- Develop a practical road map to implementation
- Create a framework for decision making
- Provide opportunities for leadership to emerge from the ground up
- Generate excitement and commitment through shared visioning and decision-making
- Assure an open, transparent process that promotes collaboration and trust
- Build a process for obtaining concrete, measurable results
- Increase collaboration and decrease competition

Utilizing an independent strategic planner trained in the participatory strategic planning processes described in this chapter, provides a neutral, unbiased planning process which promotes trust and confidence among partners.

## Develop the Planning Team by Including the Necessary Key Players



Because Family Justice Centers are designed to open silos and remove barriers to services for families, creating a new Center cannot be accomplished without involving the principals that govern, provide oversight to, and operate those existing systems and services. Each system that interfaces with your Center has its own philosophical viewpoint, its own language and its own standards.

Some key partners by nature and profession are not prone to collaboration. Organizations that operate out of a hierarchical or top-down governance model frequently balk at the idea of shared planning and consensus building. However, our experience has been that community based organizations often end up playing a vital role in partnering with government organizations — the community partners’ viewpoint is invaluable, and government planners get to hear ideas and feedback that would never have been expressed if the planning process had been skipped.

Participatory strategic planning is the process that can bridge some of those gaps by working side by side to create a shared vision, identifying blocks and barriers, and developing agreed-upon goals. The end result is the development of common language and a road map for launching a center that everyone has a hand in creating.

A good strategic plan will be realistic and attainable so that the planning team is able to think strategically and act operationally. And, in the case of a new Family Justice Center, a good planning process must

be participatory and inclusive. Including key stakeholders and the necessary players is crucial. Stakeholders will generally include representatives from your Center’s on- and off-site partners and your community “tall trees”—government leaders, non-governmental organization leaders, community and business leaders, and other policy makers that work in the field of human and social services.

If some of your tall trees are busy and pressed for time, invite them to participate in a limited capacity. They can kick off your planning process, welcome participants, briefly share their ideas, voice their support, and identify challenges to be addressed. And as you gain those supporters on a conceptual level, keep a list of all those that support the vision!

Who manages the systems and services in your community? Who do you need to include in your planning process? Make a long list; invite them early to get the planning date on their calendars. Send e-mail reminders. Send an advance agenda. Ask them to RSVP. Follow up until you get an answer. Create a master strategic planning participant list. These are the same folks you are going to invite back again for follow-up meetings and 90-day reviews.

## What Kind of Products will be Generated During the Planning Process?

The participatory strategic planning process will create a customized plan to guide the development of a Family Justice Center. This will include a shared vision for a fully operational center; mission/values clarification; a description of blocks and barriers standing in the way and strategies to overcome those barriers; short-term priorities and actions to move toward achieving the vision; a one year work plan that spells out tasks, assignments and timelines; indicators of success; a plan for managing, implementing, reviewing and updating the strategic plan.

## What Can Participants Expect?

The initial planning process typically consists of two days. During that time, participants can expect to work in large and small groups. There will be opportunities to brainstorm ideas and to explore issues at a deep level. Participants should dress comfortably. The days will be eight hours long. Six hours will be used for strategic planning work. Two hours will be used for lunch and breaks. Participants will be consulted about the timing of these breaks based on local customs and practices.

Participants are asked to stay engaged for the entire two day planning process. There are exceptions of course, but the product and process is most effective when participants can commit to two full days. Participants will be given the opportunity to join and lead specific workgroups based on their interest and expertise such as: Finding a Location; Safety and Security; Partnership Development, etc. Even though not all participants will want to serve on a workgroup, they will continue to be part of the planning team, invited to attend scheduled progress review meetings, informed of all major decisions, and called upon for their advice, assistance and expertise as the planning process goes forward.

## Once the Plan is Developed—Use it!

The resulting strategic plan is more than a document. It is a container filled with the planning team's combined hopes, dreams and commitments for creating a center that will change the lives of women, children and families who are victims of violence. New relationships result from the planning process, trust issues are addressed, and new commitments are made; to each other and to the process. It is critical to follow the plan. Stay the course. Honor the team's contributions; revisit the vision, reconvene the team for progress reviews, updates, trouble shooting, and shared learning. The resulting five-year strategic plan developed in Jordan can be a model for other communities across the Middle East.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. To view the five-year strategic plan developed in Jordan, visit [www.familyjusticecenter.org](http://www.familyjusticecenter.org) (English) or <http://mahara.jo> (Arabic).

# What Other Centers Have Learned During Their Planning Processes



In Jordan and other communities pursuing Family Justice Centers around the world, the planning groups for Centers have learned some valuable lessons:

**Walk with the tall trees!** Include key leaders in all aspects of the planning process. This sends a clear message to participants that the planning process is important, valued, and has credibility. *Let the leadership know they are valued, too. Send meeting notes and use participant quotes.*

**Expect resistance!** Not everybody loves strategic planning. Laugh about it, acknowledge it, but don't be talked or pressured out of it. Strategic planning works. Most people will choose to participate if given an opportunity. *Those who don't like it will generally follow along if there's no way out.*

**Stay in motion.** Conduct strategic planning follow-up meetings to monitor progress, to troubleshoot problems, and to introduce new issues that need to be incorporated into the planning process. Always review the vision, create an environment of celebration, and build in time to reflect on what you've learned. *People know you're serious if you follow up and follow through.*

**Create a little stash of time.** Honor people's time and contributions. Begin and end meetings on time; provide an agenda and identify the meeting's purpose and desired outcomes. Use ground rules to help the group manage itself. Build in time for the unplanned and unexpected. *An agenda is like a budget. Always have a little stash of time tucked away to cover you in case something takes longer than expected.*

**Know who is in charge.** Create a single point of contact to keep people informed and up to date, and to answer questions about the planning process. Assign someone to send out reminder notices and meeting notes. Create a database of all participants and share, share, share. *Nothing frustrates participants more than not knowing who to call for meeting dates and reports, not having phone numbers and e-mail addresses in order to communicate.*

**Make merry.** Provide food, coffee, and tea at meetings and be on the lookout for opportunities to publicly recognize a "job well done." *Food and acknowledgement always improve the strategic planning product!*

**Always open the door for others.** Provide opportunities for leadership to emerge from the participants. Natural leaders will emerge if they are given an opportunity to use their leadership skills in the planning process. *Make sure planning processes are inclusive and collaborative.*

## Insights and Reminders

- Hire an excellent strategic planner
- Consider using outside experts and planners when first beginning (see [www.familyjusticecenter.org](http://www.familyjusticecenter.org)) for information on working with the International Family Justice Center Alliance Team)
- Do not let subject matter experts substitute for a good strategic planner
- Start strategic planning processes from the beginning and don't stop even after the Center is launched
- Document the process at every step
- Praise and reward those who engage fully in the strategic planning process
- Make good food and drink a priority during the strategic planning process!



Working Smart On Learning  
Khalid Alkhalil  
Member Center for Learning, Art & Counseling  
PARTICIPANT

HEALTH  
A drawing of a person's face with a brain-like pattern inside, and some handwritten text in Arabic.