

# Strategic Planning Guide for Newly Formed Networks

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# The Center's Purpose

The National Rural Health Resource Center (The Center) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to sustaining and improving health care in rural communities. As the nation's leading technical assistance and knowledge center in rural health, The Center focuses on five core areas:

- Performance Improvement
- Health Information Technology
- Recruitment & Retention
- Community Health Assessments
- Networking

# Focus on Newly Formed Networks

- 6-18 months
- Working on building relationships
- Focused on starting up

# Planning for Strategic Planning

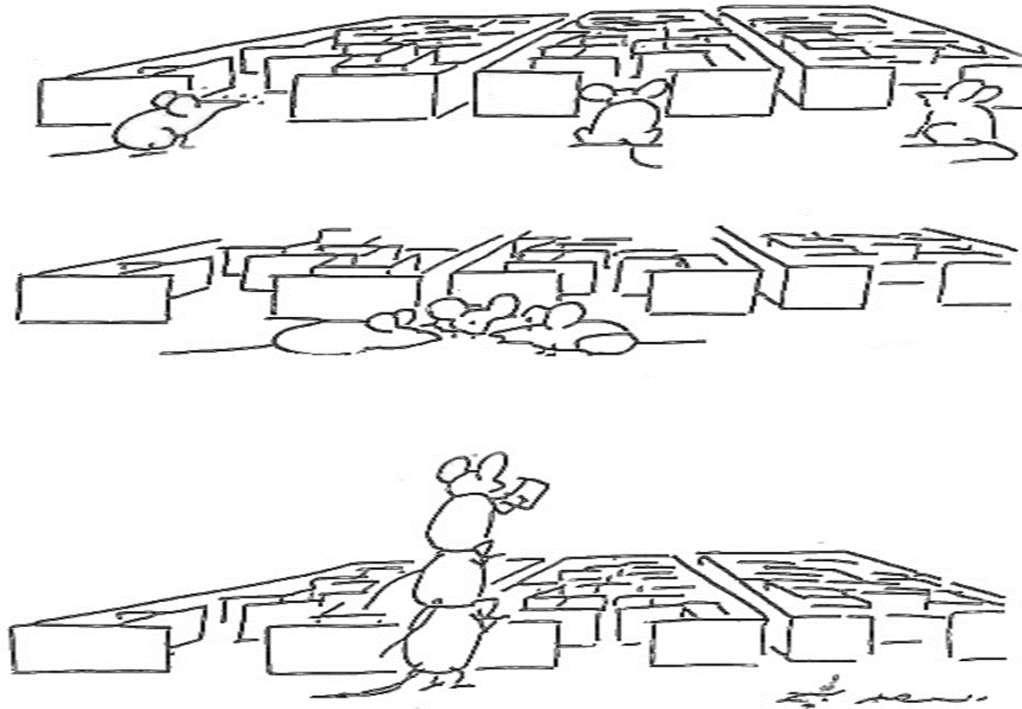
- Why is writing a strategic plan worth the effort?
- Who should be involved?
- Commitment to a shared vision
- What is the Strategic Planning Cycle
- Why does this guide stop at after analyze and plan?
- Select a planning framework: traditional strategic planning or logic model

# Is Writing a Strategic Plan Worth the Effort?

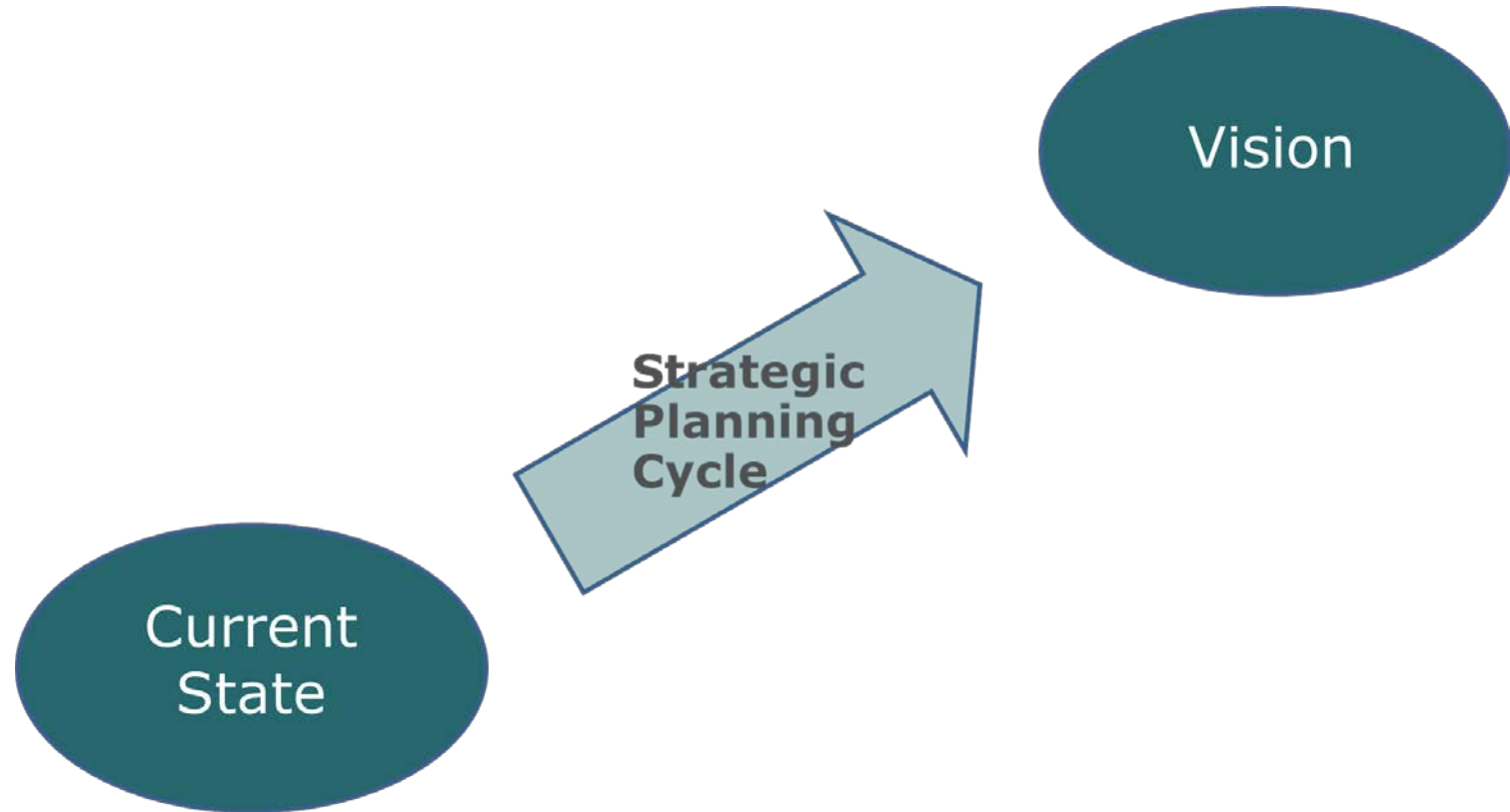
The best way to predict  
your future is to create it.

— Peter F. Drucker

# Who Should be Involved?



# Aiming for the Vision



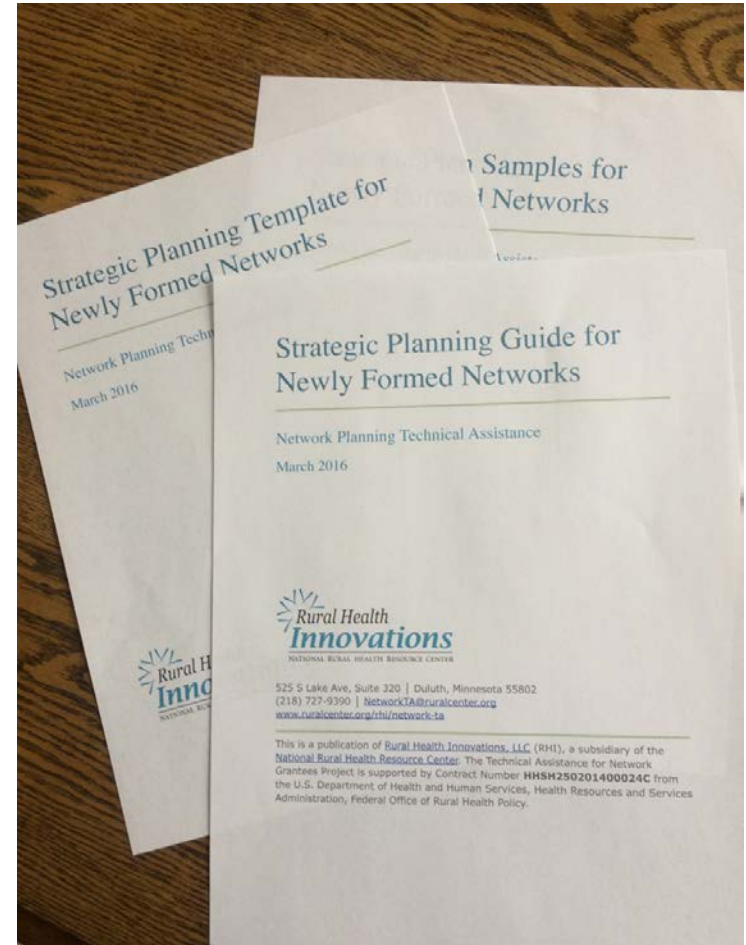
# Embrace a Strategic Planning Cycle





# Strategic Planning Toolkit

- Planning Guide
- Planning Template
- Sample Strategic Plan



# Guide

- Strategic Planning Guide for Newly Formed Networks

## Strategic Planning Guide for Newly Formed Networks

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# Background and Purpose

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE


Rural Health Innovations (RHI), LLC, is a subsidiary of the National Rural Health Resource Center (The Center), a non-profit organization. Together, RHI and The Center are the nation's leading technical assistance and knowledge centers in rural health. In partnership with The Center, RHI enhances the health of rural communities by providing products and services with a focus on excellence and innovation. RHI is providing technical assistance (TA) to the Network Planning grantees through a contract with the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

The aim of any strategic planning effort is to identify strategic paths for effective change that will move an organization from today's environment toward its vision. The purpose of this Strategic Planning Guide for Newly Formed Networks is to support Network Planning grantees in understanding:

1. Commitment to a shared vision as a key to effective strategic planning
2. The dynamic and iterative nature of the strategic planning cycle
3. Three key components of a strategic plan for a newly formed network
4. Specific tools for developing an effective strategic plan

The outcome of using this guide will be a completed strategic plan for a newly formed network that includes documentation of a shared vision, an environmental analysis of blocks and levers, and a program's or network's strategic objectives.

The audience of this Strategic Planning Guide for Newly Formed Networks includes the network leaders of rural health networks that have formed as new collaborative efforts or new organizations within the past twelve to eighteen months. This guide is designed as part of a toolkit that also includes a template and sample documents.



Note: Rural health network organizations that have been functioning as formal entities for more than two years may find our Program Strategic Planning Guide: Network Development Grantees a useful resource. The strategic planning guide developed for Network Development Grantees assumes the vision of the network is established and well understood within the network's leadership. Therefore, the primary objective of the planning effort is to develop strategic objectives that will address the levers and blocks of the current environment as the organization moves toward its shared vision.

# Glossary

## GLOSSARY

The following are terms you will find throughout the strategic planning materials, which are based on the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework. (National Institute of Standards and Technology, Baldrige Performance Excellence: <http://www.nist.gov/baldrige>)

**Alignment:** A state of consistency among plans, processes, information, resources decisions, workforce capability and capacity, actions, results, and analyses that support key organization-wide goals.

**Approach:** The methods your organization uses to carry out its processes.

**Goals:** Future conditions or performance levels that your organization intends or desires to attain.

**Governance:** The systems of management and controls exercised in the stewardship of your organization.

**Effective:** How well a process or a measure addresses its intended purpose.

**Key:** Major or most important; critical to achieving your intended outcome.

**Mission:** Your organization's overall function.

**Partners:** Key organizations or individuals who are working in concert with your organization to achieve a common goal or improve performance.

**Results:** Outputs and outcomes achieved by your organization.

**Stakeholders:** All groups that are or might be affected by your organization's actions and success.

**Strategic objectives:** The aims or responses that your organization articulates to address major changes or improvement, competitiveness or social issues, and service advantages.

**Vision:** Your organization's desired future state.



# Getting Started

## GETTING STARTED WITH STRATEGIC PLANNING

The work of strategic planning provides a means for building stakeholder consensus on the vision of the network and the objectives that will drive change. Following are questions to consider as preparation for developing and writing a strategic plan for a newly formed network.

### **Is writing a strategic plan worth the effort?**

A strategic plan is the end result of an intentional planning effort. Peter Drucker, a management thinker from the '50s and '60s, said, "The best way to predict your future is to create it." The goal of strategic planning is to articulate the paths that will create the desired future. Strategic planning provides a focus for an organization and a process to determine the key areas to work on that will move an organization toward its vision and fulfill its purpose.

Strategic planning has also been shown to have an effect on rural health network sustainability. According to results of the Rural HIT Network Development grant program from 2011 to 2014, networks that identified more intentional strategic planning efforts scored significantly higher on network sustainability than those networks that identified less of a focus on strategic planning (4.5 compared to 3.8 on a scale of 5.0).

Strategic plans serve a purpose for both internal and external audiences.

- a. Internal readers will use the strategic plan as a reference for decision making and a guide or roadmap for meeting challenging changes.
- b. External readers will use the strategic plan to gain a better understanding of the organization's focus, direction and strategies in order to make decisions such as funding or membership.

### **Which strategic planning framework should we use?**

There are two planning frameworks commonly used in the planning process: traditional strategic planning and logic model. Both approaches involve the same components and conversations, but the descriptive language and terms will vary.

# Components

## STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENTS FOR NEWLY FORMED NETWORKS

This guide provides support to networks in developing a strategic plan based on the following three components:

### **1. Network Purpose and Shared Vision**

This section provides a high-level overview of the network's history, members, mission, and shared vision.

### **2. Environmental Scan and Analysis**

This section reviews significant characteristics of the network's internal and external environment in terms of key blocks and strengths of the network.

### **3. Strategic Objectives and Key Initiatives**

This section identifies the two to three year strategic objectives and key initiatives that will move the network toward its vision.

# Strategic Plan Components: Overview

- Network Purpose and Shared Vision
- Environmental Scan and Analysis
- Strategic Objectives and Key Initiatives



# Network Purpose and Shared Vision

## Network Purpose and Shared Vision

Provide a high-level overview of your network and set the context for the strategic planning effort. When writing your strategic plan, the following elements are typical for this section:

**History:** The information in this section provides the reader with context for the network's activities and infrastructure. A brief overview of the main points and significant achievements is an appropriate level of detail for the strategic plan.

**Members:** Listing the key partners participating in the network will help illustrate collaborative achievements, demonstrate the level of community commitment, and convey the scope of the project. Also consider including the location or service area of each partner, the type of organization, and its role in the network.

**Mission:** A mission statement articulates your network's purpose for being and the network's values. Another way of saying this is that the mission describes how the network will achieve its vision in relation to specific objectives and customer needs.

**Shared Vision:** A vision statement or list of vision "achievements" expresses your network's aspirations. It outlines where your network wants to be in the next two to three years acting as a beacon for identifying strategic objectives.

It is critical for the network's vision to have full commitment from leadership, staff, and stakeholders in the early steps of planning. See the Facilitation Guide section for assistance in developing a shared network vision or conducting a vision check-in discussion.

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# Environmental Scan and Analysis

## Environmental Scan and Analysis

This section reviews significant characteristics of the network's internal and external environment in terms of key blocks and strengths of the network.

It is important within the Analyze and Plan phase of the strategic planning cycle to take time to gather and study the environment in which the network is functioning. It is in this effort and analysis that the network can identify the aspects of the network's environment that will assist in reaching the vision of the network and those issues that are blocks to achieving the shared vision.

When writing your strategic plan a summary of the environmental data and findings from the environmental analysis are included.

**Environmental Scan:** Below is a checklist of suggested environmental scan information to gather in preparation for rural health network strategic planning.

# Environmental Scan Data

Suggested Environmental Scan Data
<b>Structure and Governance</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mission and values</li><li>• List of board members and/or network leadership, including name, job title, employer, and length of service</li><li>• Network governance and policies</li><li>• List of partner organizations and brief description of collaboration history</li><li>• Results from member needs assessment or collaboration assessment</li></ul>
<b>Resource Development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Network positions and FTE allocation</li><li>• Summary of financial environment and primary revenue streams</li><li>• Financial forecast for the next 2-3 years</li><li>• Inventory of other resources owned by the network or shared by network partners</li></ul>
<b>Market Analysis</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Geographic setting of the network</li><li>• Demographic information for the service areas of the members (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, income)</li><li>• Health indicators of the service area population</li><li>• List of local and regional service providers</li><li>• Member, customer and/ or patient satisfaction survey results</li></ul>
<b>Significant Initiative Progress</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grant project work plan update and progress report</li><li>• Network evaluation plan update</li><li>• Communication plan tracking</li></ul>

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### 3. Strategic Objectives and Key Initiatives

This section identifies the two to three year strategic objectives and key initiatives that will move the network toward its vision.



# Strategic Objectives

## Strategic Objectives and Key Initiatives

This section identifies the two to three year strategic objectives and key initiatives that will move the network toward its vision. Listing and communicating the agreed upon strategic objectives and key initiatives as they relate to an area aligned with the shared vision of the network is the primary purpose of the strategic plan. Therefore, it is important to make it easy for both the internal and external reader to see the alignment of the strategic objectives and key initiatives with the vision of the network.

When writing this section of your strategic plan we recommend using a chart to illustrate alignment of the network's strategic objectives and key initiatives. Use the Strategic Planning Sample document to see both a traditional strategic plan framework presentation and a logic model framework presentation of strategies and initiatives.

For newly formed networks we are recommending an intentional focused effort to identify both objectives and initiatives since in the collaborative environment of a newly formed network a success factor is to practice solving problems and attaining agreed upon achievements together. In this strategic plan guide there is less emphasis on the communication, operationalizing and monitor and adjust phases to encourage spend more focus and time in the analyze and plan phase of the strategic planning cycle.

Although there are two specific steps for developing strategic objectives and key initiatives, sometimes, due to the nature of newly formed networks, initiatives are also identified during the strategic objectives planning effort. Following are some suggestions and guidance on both the strategic objectives and key initiatives steps.

**Strategic Objectives:** Are the paths for moving an organization toward the shared vision.

- Utilizing the environmental scan and analysis to prepare the planning participants for strategic thinking is a best practice of strategic planning.
- A participative process is key to building consensus among stakeholders and identifying meaningful strategic objectives. This is how for example

# Strategic Objectives

- Are the paths for moving an organization toward the shared vision.





# Key Initiatives

- Leadership and staff operationalize the strategic objectives through implementation of key initiatives
  - The objectives broken down into single steps
  - Single activities

# Facilitation Guide for Strategic Planning

## FACILITATION GUIDE FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

The following materials are designed to provide support in designing and leading strategic planning events that include discussions and workshops with network stakeholders. The facilitation conversations and workshops are based on the Technology of Participation Focus Conversation and Workshop methods. These methods are based on participative values and group decision making facilitation principles.

The goal of the following tools is to provide network leaders with ways to engage stakeholders through meaningful discussion and problem solving for effective strategic planning.

This guide contains the following six facilitation tools:

### **Strategic Planning Design and Agendas**

1. The first agenda illustrates a single event designed for six to eight hours of presentation, discussion, and planning.
2. The second agenda breaks the planning elements down into four 60- to 90-minute sessions, which could be completed over the course of four monthly board meetings, for example.

### **Shared Vision Workshop and Vision Check-In**

3. If your network has not yet fully developed your network vision, the Shared Vision Workshop will guide you through the visioning process.
4. If your network has an established vision, it is important to revisit the vision through an intentional check-in and commitment discussion before moving forward with strategic planning.

### **Environmental Scan and Analysis Workshop**

5. After a facilitator presents the data collected during the environmental scan, the planning participants will engage in a discussion to analyze the data. Through this conversation, participants will identify the key levers and blocks the network is facing.

### **Strategic Objectives Workshop**

6. Participants will brainstorm the actions and activities that will help move the network toward its vision, while leveraging the prioritized levers and

# Agenda

## 1. Strategic Planning Agenda: Single-Day Event

[Rural Health Network]  
Strategic Planning Event  
[Date and Time]  
[Location City, State]

### 9:00 – 10:00 am

Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda – 30 min

*Network Director*  
*Planning Facilitator*

Strategic Planning Overview and Methodology (presentation) – 30 min

### 10:00 – 12:00 pm

Strategic Planning – Part 1

Shared Vision:

- Shared Vision Workshop – 90 min (if vision needs to be created or revised)
- *OR Vision Check-In and Commitment – 30 min (if vision is established)*

Environmental Scan (presentation) – 30 min

### 12:00 – 12:30 pm Lunch

### 12:30 – 3:30 pm

Strategic Planning – Part 1 (continued)

Environmental Analysis to Prioritize Levers and Blocks – 60 min

Strategic Planning – Part 2

Development of Strategic Objectives – 100 min

Alignment of Strategic Objectives with Mission and Vision – 20 min

### 3:30 – 4:30 pm

# Vision

## 3. Vision Workshop Facilitation Guide: 90-minutes workshop

<b>Rational Objective:</b> Create a practical and shared vision to use for aiming the strategic planning.		<b>Experiential Objective:</b> Feel motivated by a common vision for the future.
<b>Setup and materials:</b> Sticky wall or blank wall for displaying notes and writing markers. 50 half-sheets of paper, 10 green full sheets of paper		
<b>Pre-requisites:</b> Environmental scan and state of the network report by the Network Director. Network members share own organization goals and efforts that are aligned or overlap with the network's efforts.		
<b>FOCUS QUESTION: What do we want to achieve in the coming 2-3 years as a result of our work?</b>		
<b>Opening and Context: (5 min)</b> Review the purpose and description of a shared vision. Provide an opening story for imagining the future of the organization. For example: <i>There is a documentary team coming into town to do a story on the health and vitality of rural communities. This network has been selected as an "Outstanding Model Organization" and asked to present at a national rural health conference to tell its story of success in improving the health and wellness of their community. What has been achieved in the past 2-3 years? What are some of activities you want to be sure to highlight? What events have taken place? What are community members saying about the health and vitality of the community? How are people working together that is different than before? Who are some of your key champions and partners? What new partnerships have been formed? What are the neighboring communities saying about this rural health network?</i>		
<b>Brainstorm: (20 min)</b> Brainstorm a list of concrete elements of the vision that you can see completed in 2-3 years. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working individually, make a list of &gt;10 ideas.</li> <li>2. Review your individual list and star 4-5 own best ideas.</li> <li>3. Working in groups or pairs, combine your lists and <u>select the best 5-6 ideas</u>. (Note: Need 30-35 total data pieces, assumes 6 pairs)</li> <li>4. Write <u>one idea per white half-sheet</u>. Use 3-5 words to describe. (Post example for reference.)</li> </ol>	<b>Data and Organize: (30 min)</b> Form ideas into pairs and cluster: <b>"What are similar accomplishments or achievements?"</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the clearest or most straightforward ideas? Have each group select 2-3 ideas (white half-sheets) from their list.</li> <li>2. What are unique ideas or complex ideas? Have each group select 2-3 other ideas from their list.</li> <li>3. Start forming columns of ideas with similar "accomplishments or achievements." Complete clustering.</li> <li>4. For the rest of the ideas, have participants post them within columns and report additions to larger group.</li> </ol>	<b>Name: (30 min)</b> The intent of this section is to name the different components of the shared vision by naming the columns of ideas/data: <b>"What is the accomplishment that is reflected in each column of ideas?"</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For each column read through the idea sheets in that column.</li> <li>2. Give each column a 3-5 word name. It is helpful to use <del>Adj-Adj</del> Noun. For example: cross agency collaboration, integrated health home, healthy lifestyle culture, comprehensive health services.</li> </ol> <p><i>Note: Because these are not strategies, try to avoid using verbs when naming the components of the vision.</i></p>
<b>Commitment to the vision: (5 min)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a participant read across the vision titles.</li> <li>• <i>Are there any surprises in these? Which one is the most vivid or the hardest to imagine?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is the significance of the vision we have described here together?</i></li> <li>• <i>Our strategic work will be aiming at our vision, and we all need to be aiming for the same thing. Do these consensus areas describe the shared vision we have for our network? A show of thumbs-up (agree), flat (can live with), or thumbs down (can't live with and need more discussion).</i></li> </ul>		



# Environmental Scan

## 4. Environmental Scan Analysis Facilitation Guide – 90 minute workshop

<b>Rational Objective:</b> Find key levers and blocks, both internal and external, which will be incorporated into the development of strategic objectives.		<b>Experiential Objective:</b> Feel confident that the key leverage points and underlying blocks have been identified in order to consider strategic options.	
<b>Setup and Materials:</b> Sticky wall or blank wall for displaying notes, writing markers, 2-4 flip chart-sized papers. Label two papers, one as “Levers” and one as “Blocks”			
<b>Pre-requisites:</b> Presentation of environmental scan data and commitment to a shared vision.			
<b>FOCUS QUESTION:</b> <i>“What are the levers and blocks that we will either leverage or work around in moving toward our vision?”</i>			
<b>Opening:</b> Review the purpose and description of an environmental analysis; identifying key levers and blocks. <i>Given the information provided in the environmental scan presentation, we will be considering our focus question. In this discussion, we will begin by first brainstorming events and happenings that will help our network move towards its vision (levers) and also those that will get in our way (blocks). We will share our ideas and discuss together to gain insight on what we can leverage and the underlying issues that we need to be aware of as we plan the paths we will take toward our vision.</i>			
<b>Brainstorm: (10 min)</b> Individually brainstorm the events and happenings going on in health care, your community, and your organization that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Helping the network move toward its vision (<b>leveraging</b>)</li><li>Getting in the way of the network from moving towards its vision (<b>blocking</b>)</li><li>Working individually, make a list of &gt;10 ideas.</li><li>Review your individual list and star 4-5 own best ideas.</li></ul>	<b>Small Group Discussion: (15 min)</b> First for levers and then for blocks.  Working in pairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Between both individual lists, select the top best 5-6 ideas. (Note: need 30-35 total data pieces, assumes 6 pairs)</li><li>Ask small groups to be ready to share with the larger group, 1 idea at a time.</li></ul>	<b>Report Out: (20 min)</b> Synthesize the data to identify key leverage points and key blocks. Sharing from small groups, one group at a time until all levers and blocks are shared. The intent of this section is to identify those underlying levers and blocks; Ask deeper questions if there is a ‘Lack of’ description and seek the cause of the issue. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ASK: What are the clearest or most straight forward ideas? (record onto flip chart; moving to each group following a response)</li><li>Ask: what are different ideas or complex ideas?</li><li>Continue around the small groups until all levers and then blocks have been shared</li></ul>	<b>Identify Keys: (15 min)</b> The intent of this section is to prioritize underlying levers and blocks and transition to the strategic planning effort.  Working together as a large group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Of these Levers/Blocks (address separately) which ones are important for us to highlight and be sure to bring forward in our planning and problem solving. (underline the levers and blocks that participants identify)</li><li>[IF TIME] Ask participants to put a mark to have the group Prioritize: “What are Top 3 Levers and Top 3 Blocks that are <u>critical to move the network toward its vision/mission</u>”?</li><li>Allow 15 min for this voting work.</li></ul>
<b>Transition to development of strategic objectives: (5 min)</b> Next Step: Getting started with strategic thinking and planning. Looking for key paths that will take us from our current reality to our desired future state. <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Have a participant read organizations vision and another person read through the titles of Levers and Blocks</li><li>Are there any surprises in these? Did we get to the underlying issue or the cause?</li><li>Of the Top 3 Levers, which will be easiest to leverage and take advantage of? Which one will be more difficult? Of the Top 3 Blocks which one will be the easiest to deal with or work around? Which one the hardest?</li></ol>			

# Strategic Objectives

## 5. Strategic Objectives Facilitation Guide – 120 minute workshop

<b>Rational Objective:</b> Reach group consensus on strategic objectives that address the levers and blocks and that will move the network toward its vision.		<b>Experiential Objective:</b> Agree that the identified strategic objectives are doable and will provide guidance to the organization over the coming 2-3 years.	
<b>Setup and Materials:</b> Sticky wall or blank wall for displaying notes and writing markers. 50 half-sheets of paper, 10 blue full sheets of paper 6-8 full yellow sheets of paper. Writing utensils. Painter's tape if needed.			
<b>Pre-requisite:</b> Completed environmental analysis with established priorities of underlying levers and blocks.			
<b>Opening:</b> <i>Together, we will be considering, "What are the key strategic objectives that will guide this organization from today's reality toward tomorrow's vision?" We have agreed on our network vision and identified the key levers and blocks of our current reality. In this discussion, we will begin brainstorming actions and activities that will move us toward our vision and then spend time identifying key strategies that our ideas describe. We'll then seek consensus on the strategic goals or objectives that will provide guidance to our network over the coming 2-3 years.</i>			
<b>Brainstorm: (10 min)</b> Individually brainstorm: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What are the ideas, initiatives, tasks, or to-do's that will address the issues impacting the network that we identified in the environmental analysis?</li><li>Have each person compile a list of &gt;10 ideas.</li><li>After giving time for brainstorming, have each person review his/her list and star the 4-5 best ideas.</li></ul>	<b>Data: (10 min)</b> Working in pairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Compare between both lists and select the top 5-6 ideas. (Note: Need 30-35 total data pieces, assumes 6 pairs)</li><li>Describe each idea using 3-5 words. Write one idea per half-sheet of paper and post on wall, or use flip chart to record ideas.</li></ul>	<b>Organize: (40 min)</b> Working together as a large group, synthesize the data to identify key leverage points and key blocks. Another way to think of this is seeking consensus on strategic directions or objectives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cluster data into similar ideas. <i>What is the common thread or strategic path being described by this data that moves the network from today's reality to tomorrow's vision?</i></li><li>Seek consensus on the key strategic directions or objectives by naming the clusters. For each cluster, ask, "In this cluster, what is the title that best describes the strategic idea?"<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Titles should be descriptive and action oriented, 3-5 words: <b>verb + adjective + noun</b>. Examples: Improve Operating Efficiency, Provide Outstanding Customer Service, and Deliver Timely and Effective Care.</li><li>Write strategic objective title on a full sheet of green paper and place at top of cluster.</li></ul></li></ul>	<b>Name: (20 min)</b> The intent of this section is to prioritize the strategic objectives and set commitment (strategic objectives = titles agreed upon in the interpretive step). <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Read the titles across and refer back to the overall planning question: (TITLES) are our key strategic objectives that will guide this network toward its vision.</li></ul> Ask participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How do these strategic objectives align with our network's mission?</li><li>Which of these strategic objectives are critical to our network's sustained success?</li><li>Which will take more focus and dedication of us as members?</li><li>How will we as network leaders be involved in promoting and communicating these strategic objectives?</li></ul>
<b>Begin to review the strategic objectives:</b> Next Step: Double check for SMART objectives and revise as needed. Begin considering the key initiatives that the network can undertake for each strategic objective. Transition to assessing the objectives' alignment with vision and mission.			

# Alignment

## 6. Alignment with Vision and Mission Facilitation Guide – 30 minute discussion

<b>Rational Objective:</b> Confirm alignment of new strategic objectives with network vision and mission.	<b>Experiential Objective:</b> Gain understanding of and comfort with the new network strategic objectives relative to the organization's vision and mission.
<b>Setup and Materials:</b> Prominently display or provide the network vision and mission.	
<b>Opening:</b> <i>Throughout our strategic planning efforts, we have worked to aim our thinking and our strategies toward our network vision, recognizing that it is our shared vision that is pulling our network forward.</i> [Read through vision that is displayed nearby for everyone to see. It is nice to have the vision posted to the left of the strategic objectives in as a "target."] <i>Let's spend the next 15 minutes or so checking our new strategic objectives back to our vision to double check that we are indeed aiming for it.</i>	
<b>Focused Conversation: (10-15 min)</b> Have someone read through each of the newly agreed-upon strategic objectives. Then ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Which of these objectives are ah-ha's or surprises? Any that really "hit the nail on the head"?</i></li> <li>• <i>How do these strategic objectives move us toward our vision?</i></li> <li>• <i>How do these strategic objectives follow the guidance of our mission?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are there any themes running through the objectives?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ If objectives are identified as "similar" in strategy, rearrange the information to group those objectives next to each other and consider adding a larger title to capture the common idea.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Which of these objectives are going to be more difficult to operationalize or will need careful monitoring?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Place a star by the identified objectives to highlight them. This is a good place to emphasize the role of the board or advisory group to monitor progress toward the strategic objective and the network leadership's role to operationalize the objectives into actions and initiatives.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>What might be the impact on our communities as our network uses these objectives to guide our work?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is our commitment to these strategic objectives to guide our work toward our vision?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Check in with everyone to gain consensus with a thumbs-up (agree), flat (can live with), or thumbs-down (can't live with and need additional discussion).</li> <li>◦ Do not complete the planning without full consensus (thumbs-up or flat). If there are any thumbs-down, then more discussion is needed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Next stages of strategic planning:</b> Seek formal acceptance of the strategic objectives by the board/advisory. Articulate the key initiatives the network will engage in to support the strategic objectives.	



# Key Initiatives

## 7. Identify Key Initiatives Facilitation Guide – 30 minute discussion

<p><b>Rational Objective:</b> Identify how each of the stakeholder organizations are contributing to the networks vision and strategic objectives and Identify network key initiatives, those 6-18 month projects that begin to operationalize the strategic objectives and are complimentary and additive to the stakeholder initiatives.</p>	<p><b>Experiential Objective:</b> Begin to image the work ahead of the network and how the network will provide value to the stakeholder organizations</p>
<p><b>Setup and Materials:</b> Prominently display or provide the network vision and mission and the strategic objectives, posted to the sticky wall. 10-15 salmon half-sheets and 10-15 yellow full sheets.</p>	
<p><b>Opening:</b> <i>As we have worked, during our strategic planning efforts, to aim our thinking and our strategies toward our network vision. [Read through vision that is displayed nearby for everyone to see. It is nice to have the vision posted to the left of the strategic objectives in as a "target." We are going to spend about 30 minutes identify how each of our organizations are already contributing to the network's efforts and also what projects, key initiatives, the network can consider to fit with, contribute, or take on, that is in alignment with our shared vision for the network.</i></p>	
<p><b>Focused Conversation: (10-15 min)</b> Have someone read through the network's strategic objectives</p> <p>Then ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>As stakeholders, consider your current initiatives, what 6-18 month project are aligned with the networks strategic objectives. Select the three best fits with the networks vision and objectives:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Write each of the 3 identified initiatives on salmon half-sheets and post next to the appropriate strategic objective.</li> <li>◦ Each stakeholder organization report out their top three initiatives and why they placed them next to the selected strategic objective.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>For the network,</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>what initiatives do we currently have in place that are complementary to the stakeholder organizations or fills a gap (write on Yellow full sheets and place next to the selected strategic objective)</i></li> <li>◦ <i>For the network, what are new initiatives we could consider that would move the network toward the vision and which strategic objectives does it fit? (write on Yellow full sheets and place next to the selected strategic objective)</i></li> <li>◦ <i>For the network, are there any of our current initiatives that do not fit with our strategic objectives? (white on white full sheets and place along the bottom or to the right side of the sticky wall)</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>What might be the impact on our communities as our network continue or begins to implement these 6-12 month initiatives? ?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are possible timelines and resources needed for these identified initiatives? (write on white half sheets and post next to associated initiative)</i></li> <li>• <i>What are next steps for our network to begin to operationalize these initiatives?</i></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Next stages of strategic planning:</b> Articulate the key initiatives and activities the network will engage in to support the strategic objectives. Seek formal acceptance of the strategic objectives by the board/advisory. Begin to plan communication of the objectives with stakeholders.</p>	



# Next Steps

## CONTINUING THE STRATEGIC PLANNING CYCLE

As the network organization gains familiarity working with the strategic plan developed in the Analyze & Plan phase, it will become time to continue the planning process and pursue the next phases in the strategic planning cycle. See the Strategic Planning Toolkit for Development Grantees and the resources listed below for additional guidance when you're ready to begin these steps.

### **1. Communicate strategic objectives throughout the network organization.**

Developing a communication plan specifically for approved strategic objectives and the environmental analysis with partners and stakeholders is a key step for building commitment and accountability in achieving the strategic objectives. Consider the audience, the channel, the timeline, and the responsible parties for each message within the plan. It's often valuable to create visual representations of the objectives and progress for use in your communications, including tools like a strategy map or a dashboard.

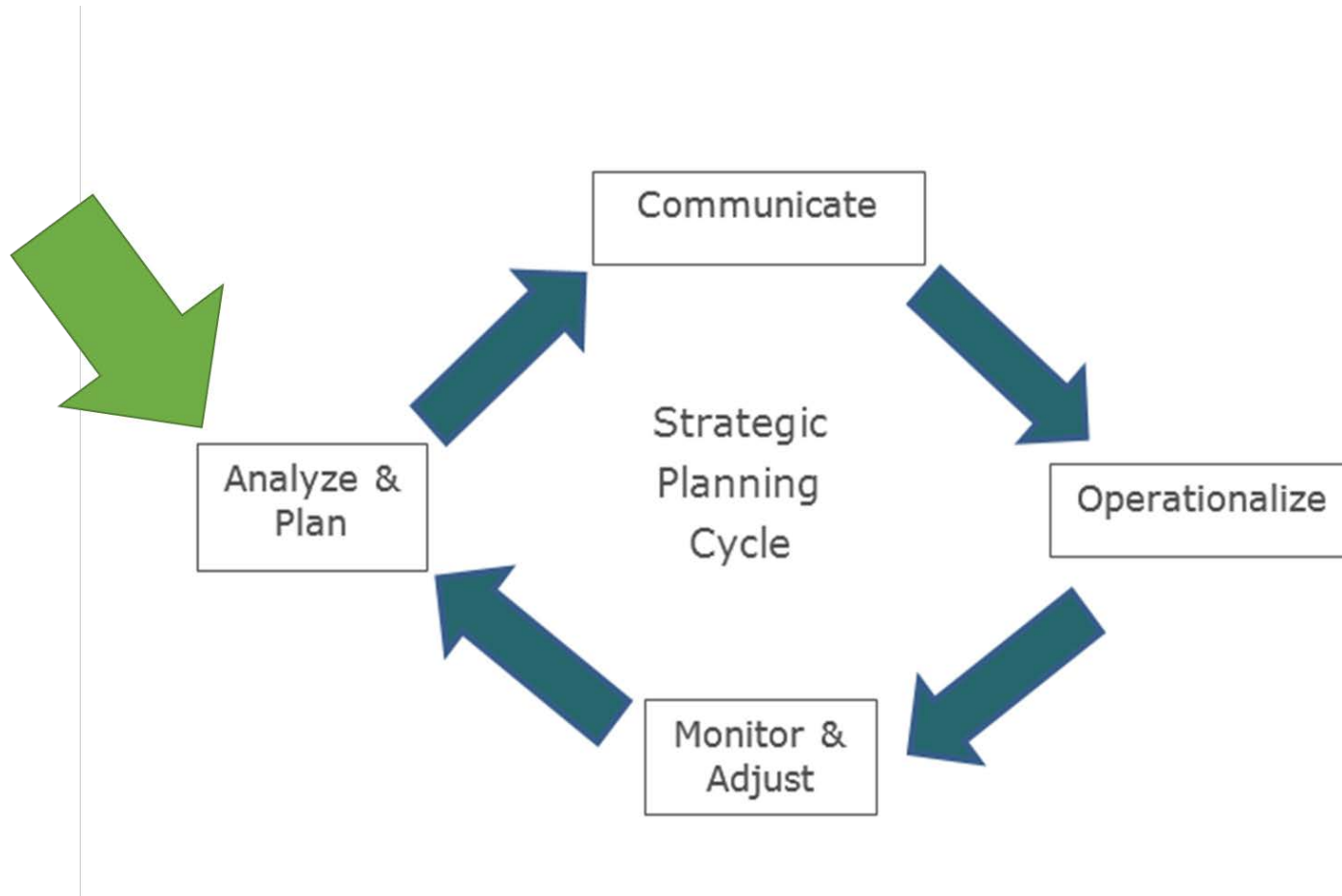
### **2. Operationalize key initiatives with a project management**

For newly formed networks that have utilized this strategic planning guide, operationalizing the plan describes the next level of detail related to select key initiatives. The network work plan is a project management tool for activities related to the identified key initiatives. Using visual tools, such as a scorecard or a logic model, are helpful when documenting progress and status of the key initiatives.

### **3. Monitor progress of the strategic objectives & Adjust to keep aim on the shared vision**

Strategic objectives must be monitored and reviewed over time to determine the effectiveness of the network's progress toward the network vision. Consider developing an evaluation plan to identify measures of success, data collection and reporting results. It is critical to schedule regular review sessions with the network board and staff to discuss progress toward goals and identify any needed course adjustments. It may be helpful to implement a Balanced Scorecard or a dashboard with key measures, targets, and results. Evaluation Plan Guide and Template

# Strategic Planning Cycle



# Resources

## STRATEGIC PLANNING RESOURCES

For further research and guidance on the strategic planning process, we encourage you to explore these additional resources:

- Aim for Impact and Sustainability: National Rural Health Resource Center  
<https://www.ruralcenter.org/rhi/network-ta/aim`-for-impact>
  - Strategic Plan Guide for Development Grantees
  - Evaluation Plan Guide for Development Grantee
  - Evaluation plan Guide for Allied Health Grantees
  - Collaboration Toolkit
- Baldrige Performance Excellence Program: Health Care  
[http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/publications/hc\\_criteria.cfm](http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/publications/hc_criteria.cfm)
- Business Model Canvas, Business Model Generation  
<http://www.businessmodelgeneration.com/canvas/bmc>
- Integrating the Strategic Plan, Logic Model, and Work plan, Evaluation Research Team  
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief5.pdf>
- Strategic Planning Basics, Balanced Scorecard Institute  
<http://balancedscorecard.org/Resources/Strategic-Planning-Basics>
- Strategic Planning Process Outline, Center for Rural Health, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences  
<https://www.ruralcenter.org/tasc/resources/strategic-planning>
- Strategic Planning That Leaves you Smiling, Studer Group (webinar recorded 10/13/2014)  
<https://www.studergroup.com/resources/news-media/articles/studer-group-to-host-national-rural-health>
- Strategic Planning That Works: Integrating Strategy with Performance, American College of Healthcare Executives (webinar series ACHE members: \$530, Non-members: \$605)  
[http://www.ache.org/seminars/online\\_detail.cfm?PC=ONLSTPLAN](http://www.ache.org/seminars/online_detail.cfm?PC=ONLSTPLAN)

# Template

- Strategic Planning  
Template for Newly  
Formed Networks

## Strategic Planning Template for Newly Formed Networks

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Network Planning Technical Assistance  
March 2016



# Template

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Rural Health Innovations (RHI), LLC, is a subsidiary of the National Rural Health Resource Center (The Center), a non-profit organization. Together, RHI and The Center are the nation's leading technical assistance and knowledge centers in rural health. In partnership with The Center, RHI enhances the health of rural communities by providing products and services with a focus on excellence and innovation. RHI is providing TA to the Network Planning grantees through a contract with the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

This Program Strategic Plan Template was created to provide support to Network Planning grantees in writing an effective and dynamic strategic plan based off of a participative planning event.

This template is designed for use in conjunction with [Guide]. For samples of the completed strategic plan components reviewed in the guide and template, see [Samples]. Additional resources on strategic planning can be found at [Aim for Impact].

## INSTRUCTIONS

Although a specific template for the strategic plan is not required as part of the Network Planning grant deliverable, the following components are recommended:

1. Program Description and Shared Vision
2. Environmental Scan and Analysis
3. Strategic Objectives and Key Initiatives

There is no one "correct" way to present a strategic plan. We offer this template to provide your network with ideas and a starting point as you make decisions about creating your report. To use this template for documenting your network's strategic plan, complete the following steps:

1. Revise the cover page to display the appropriate network/program information, including name, location, the authors of the report, and the date
2. Remove the Background and Purpose section and the Instructions section within



# Components within Template

[Network Organization] Strategic Plan

## STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENTS

### Network Purpose and Shared Vision

Provide a high-level overview of your network and set the context for the strategic planning effort. Keep this section to no more than two pages. Standard narrative text is typically the most functional format for this component, although tables or charts could certainly be created if desired. [Use the guide and sample for additional explanation](#)

We recommend including the following when writing this section of the strategic plan:

- **Network History**
- **Network Members**
- **Network Mission**
- **Network Vision**, along with a brief description of your process for reaching consensus on and/or reviewing the shared vision

# Components within Template

[Network Organization] Strategic Plan

## Environmental Scan and Analysis

This section reviews significant characteristics of the network's internal and external environment in terms of key blocks and strengths of the network. The data presented from the environmental scan can be summarized in narrative form or listed as appropriate. A chart of the analysis findings and conclusions may be a useful format. The description of the environment and the accompanying analysis should be not more than two pages. **Use the guide and sample for additional explanation**

We recommend including the following when writing this section of the strategic plan:

- **Summary of Environmental Scan**
- **Environmental Analysis findings**

# Environmental Scan Analysis

Environmental Scan: Blocks and Levers	
<b>Focus Question:</b> What are the levers and blocks that the IL Rural Health Network can take advantage of and needs to deal with as it moves toward its vision?	
<b>Objective and Method:</b> Dialogue following presentation by network director on the history and vision of the network and a vision check in process. The planner went through the following process to identify and discuss levers and blocks: <i>individual brainstorming, small group discussion, listing levers and blocks, identifying a <b>consensus on the title issues for each (bold)</b></i>	
Blocks	Levers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No structure for small workgroups within the system of care</b></li> <li>• <b>No seamless communication between organizations or knowledge of each other</b></li> <li>• <b>Interpretation and sharing of data</b></li> <li>• <b>Political views, actions and need for advocacy</b></li> <li>• <b>Qualified providers and employees</b></li> <li>• <b>Family voice is missing for decision making</b></li> <li>• Needing more relationship building</li> <li>• Increase partnerships</li> <li>• Turnover of staff and key leadership amongst partners</li> <li>• Need for more educated professionals</li> <li>• Reaching families; low participation</li> <li>• Economic issues, working multiple jobs</li> <li>• Generational resistance to change</li> <li>• HIPPA</li> <li>• Funding restrictions and roadblocks effecting staff &amp; services</li> <li>• Red tape</li> <li>• Limited Resources based on geographic, socioeconomic and values</li> <li>• Entitlement mentality</li> <li>• Culture of drugs being ok and a me focus</li> <li>• Carrol and Ogle Counties low involvement</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Not meeting the needs of the Hispanic population</li> <li>• No trained bi-lingual / bi-cultural staff</li> <li>• Travel distances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Commitment to network</b></li> <li>• <b>Collaborative relationships</b></li> <li>• <b>Combined services</b> Champions have evolved</li> <li>• <b>Large successes leveraged for forward motion</b></li> <li>• <b>Grant funding because of collaboration</b></li> <li>• <b>Passion</b></li> <li>• <b>Shared values of working together</b></li> <li>• Pooling of resources and knowledge</li> <li>• Good hearts and intentions</li> <li>• Data Base Planning</li> <li>• New residents that are champions</li> <li>• New technology</li> <li>• Sharing of training</li> <li>• Communication and open mindedness</li> <li>• Mutual respect</li> <li>• Long term commitments</li> <li>• Dedicated staff</li> <li>• Small community</li> </ul>



# Components within Template

[Network Organization] Strategic Plan

## Strategic Objectives and Key Initiatives

This section identifies the two to three year strategic objectives and key initiatives that will move the network toward its vision. When writing this section of your strategic plan we recommend using a chart to illustrate alignment of the network's strategic objectives and key initiatives. See the Strategic Planning Sample document to see both a traditional strategic plan framework presentation and a logic model framework presentation of strategies and initiatives.

Strategic Objective	Key Initiatives	Resources	Timeline
A.	1.		
	2.		
B.	3.		
	4.		

# Components within Template

[Network Organization] Strategic Plan

## NEXT STEPS IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING CYCLE

For newly formed networks that have just completed the initial Analyze and Plan phase of the strategic planning cycle, next steps include considering the next phases of communication, operationalizing the plan, and monitoring and adjusting. For writing this strategic plan it would be appropriate to summarize how the network plans to approach these next steps. Providing a timeline of upcoming review sessions or committee meetings may prove helpful to the reader.

- Communicate Strategic Objectives throughout the network organization, i.e. communication plan:
- Operationalize Key Initiatives with project management, i.e. work plan:
- Monitor progress of the strategic objectives and adjust to keep aim on the shared vision, i.e. evaluation plan

- Strategic Plan Samples for Newly Formed Networks

## Strategic Plan Samples for Newly Formed Networks

Network Planning Technical Assistance  
March 2016



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- Planning Guide
- Planning Template
- Sample Strategic Plan

