

Strategic Planning for Election Organisations

A Practical Guide for Conducting a Strategic Planning Exercise

By
Joe C. Baxter
Senior Advisor for Election Administration
International Foundation For Election Systems

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	i
Introduction	ii
1. What is Strategic Planning ?	1
2. Glossary of Terms.....	3
3. Getting Started.....	5
3.1 Pre-Planning.....	6
3.2 Who Should Attend	8
3.3 The Organisational Assessment.....	9
4. The Strategic Planning Exercise.....	13
4.1 Opening Remarks.....	13
4.2 Administrative Remarks	13
4.3 Strategic Planning Overview	13
4.4 Ground Rules.....	14
4.5 The Decision Making Process	15
4.6 Planning Assumptions	15
4.7 Developing a Mission Statement, Vision and Guiding Principles.....	15
4.7.1 Mission Statement.....	16
4.7.2 Vision	17
4.7.3 Guiding Principles	18
4.8 Gap Analysis	19
4.9 Strategic Issues, Strategies Goals and Objectives	20
4.9.1 Strategic Issues	20
4.9.2 Strategic Goals	21
4.9.3 Objectives.....	21
5. The Written Plan	23
6. Implementation Plans	25
6.1 Weigh Alternative Strategies.....	26
6.2 Putting the Action Plan Together	27
6.2.1 Assign responsibility for implementation of the plan.....	27
6.2.2 Identify specific steps in the plan	27
6.2.3 Set a time of completion of the overall plan.....	27
6.2.4 Putting Plans on Paper	28
6.3 Monitoring Progress	28
7. References.....	33
8. Appendices	35
8.1 Sample Agenda.....	35
8.2 Sources for Organisational Assessment.....	37
8.3 Sample Implementation Plan	38
About the Author.....	39

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of a number of colleagues who helped bring this manual into being. First those who work for the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), Susan Palmer, Program Officer and Valeria Scott Laitinen, Senior Program Assistant both of whom read several versions of the manual and made critical comments and edits before its completion. Also thanks to Antonio Spinelli, IFES Project Manager, Republic of Georgia for reading the final draft and providing comments. Second, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria which was the first election authority to use the manual in planning their strategic planning exercise. Finally, to all the election administrators with whom the author has worked and discussed the problems of planning in election management. It is their commitment to improving the administration of elections that inspired the development of this manual.

Introduction

Increasingly governments are requiring ministries and independent bodies to engage in multi-year planning. This type of planning allows governments to better allocate scarce resources and engage in more long-term development programs. The most common method to undertake such a planning exercise is strategic planning. Strategic planning is currently in use by many democratic governments and is widely used in business. For most election authorities, however, strategic planning is a new concept.

Many electoral authorities have never engaged in this type of planning. Their focus has been from election to election or submitting multi-year budgets. Strategic planning is not simply developing a multi-year budget. It is about deciding what kind of institution the election authority wants to be and then setting a course on how to achieve becoming that institution.

This handbook has been developed for election authorities that are new to the strategic planning process and those who might want to update their current plans. There is no one method for conducting a strategic planning exercise. Each election organisation must adopt the process that best meets its own needs. For the person unfamiliar with strategic planning, this handbook provides practical advice on development of an electoral authority's mission, vision, guiding principles, strategic goals, strategies and objectives regardless of the process adopted.

1. What is Strategic Planning?

STRATEGIC PLANNING IS A MANAGEMENT TOOL TO HELP AN ELECTION AUTHORITY DO A BETTER JOB OF ADMINISTERING ELECTIONS. It helps ensure that the organisation's employees are all working toward the same goals. Strategic planning is a focused effort to produce decisions and actions that shape and guide what the election authority does, how it does it and where it will be in the future.

There are several positive and significant reasons why an electoral authority should develop a strategic plan. Strategic planning empowers an election authority to:

- ♦ **Manage for results.** In the administration of the political and technical processes of elections, election authorities must produce results against very stringent timeframes and often in a charged political environment. Strategic planning is a process of examination, objective setting and strategy building. This process is an essential part of the results-driven management that election administration requires. It relies on careful consideration of an election authority's organisational capabilities and political and cultural environment and leads to better resource allocation and decisions.

- ♦ **Plan for change.** Increasing demands for services, shrinking resources and greater expectations by the public about what an election authority should do all combine to create an environment that is constantly

changing. Most election authorities react to situations without having real input in creating that change.

Strategic planning encourages the organisation to seek change rather than react to situations.

- ♦ **Adapt.** Even though strategic planning takes a long-range approach, the use of milestones, regular updates, and reviews to determine progress and re-assess the plan allows for flexible planning. The plan can be updated based on new information and/or changed political, financial or cultural environments. It sets targets for performance, incorporates ways to check progress, and provides the election administrators with guidance for on-going operations and budgets.

- ♦ **Promote communication.** Strategic planning facilitates communication and participation. It fosters timely and orderly decision-making and successful implementation of programs, goals, and objectives. It improves communication not only among the authority's top election administrators but also among its lower level employees.

Strategic planning is a disciplined effort to shape and guide the future of an election authority, what it does and why it does it. It requires effective information gathering, the exploration of alternative ways of accomplishing tasks and emphasizes future implications of present decisions.

Election administration is about achieving and improving outcomes each year and each election cycle. Strategic planning enables election authorities to develop a system to institutionalise continuous improvement at all levels of the organisation. However, it is not a quick fix. Strategic planning is a long-term management tool that pays off over time. In order to be effective, the executive management of the electoral authority and all of the authority's employee must be committed to the plan and pay *constant* attention to implementation of the goals and objectives.

Strategic planning also helps to focus the organisation and its leaders towards common goals. Strategic planning:

- Provides a framework and focus for improvement efforts within the organisation
- Optimises the organisational systems within the election authority
- Provides guidance to managers for day-to-day decisions
- Provides a means to assess progress in meeting goals and objectives

2. Glossary of Terms

Terms used in strategic planning may be unfamiliar to those who are new to the process. Below is a list of terms used in this manual and the strategic planning process.

Baseline: Base level of past or current performance that can be used to set improvement goals and provide a basis for measuring future progress.

Capital Outlay - Expenditures for the acquisition, construction, improvement, major maintenance, and/or preservation of property and buildings.

External Assessment – Analysis of key external elements or issues that affect the environment in which an organisation functions.

Gap Analysis – An identification of the *difference* between where the organisation is, where it wants to go or what the organisation wants to be, and the current state of the organisation.

Goal – The desired end result, usually after two or more years.

Guiding Principles – The core values and philosophies that describe how an agency conducts itself in carrying out its mission.

Internal Assessment – An evaluation of an organisation's

position, performance, problems, and potential.

Implementation Plan – A detailed description of the strategies and steps used to implement a strategic plan, programme or sub-programme.

Organisational Assessment – An analysis of an organisation's internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats. Also called an internal/external assessment.

Mission Statement – An enduring statement of the purpose of the election authority. The mission statement describes what the organisation does, who it does it for, and how it does it.

Objectives - Specific and measurable targets for accomplishing goals.

Planning Assumptions – Expectations concerning future trends or events that could significantly impact on the organisation's performance and the delivery of services.

Programme – Activities that result in the accomplishment of a clearly defined mission of an organisation.

Resource Allocation - The determination and allotment of resources or assets necessary to carry out an organisation's strategies and achieve objectives within

a set of organisational priorities.

Stakeholder: Any person or group with a vested interest in or with expectations of a certain level of performance or compliance from the organization, its programs and subprograms. Anyone whose interests are served by, or who receives or uses services of the organisation, its programmes and sub programmes.

Strategic Issues - Those concerns of critical importance to the election organisation which often impact several or all of the programs and functions of the organisation.

Strategic Management – The overall framework within which policy development, strategic/quality planning, operational planning and budgeting, capital outlay planning and budgeting, program implementation, program evaluation and accountability take place.

Strategic Plan - A practical, action-oriented guide based on an examination of internal and external factors that directs goal-setting and resource allocation to achieve meaningful results over time.

Sub-programme – Two or more integral components of a program that can be separately analysed to gain a better understanding of the larger program.

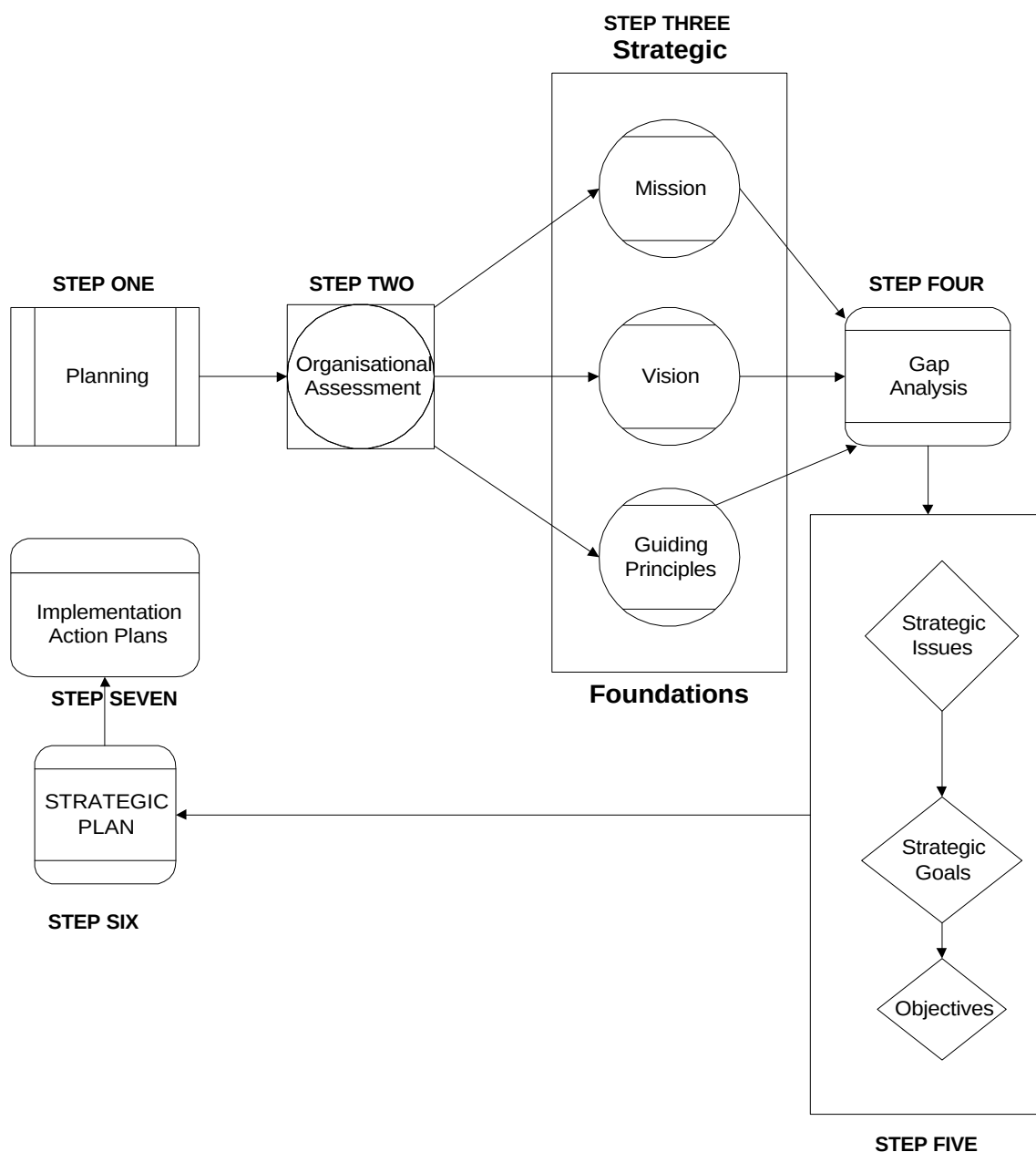
Vision Statement – An idealized view of what the election authority would like to be in the future.

3. Getting Started

Once the election authority decides that it wants to develop a strategic plan for the organisation, the first question that is asked is “Where do we start?” This chapter provides a step-by-step guide to getting the strategic planning process underway. The diagram

below illustrates the strategic planning process.

The following sections take the reader through the steps in the strategic planning process. Each section contains a definition of what the step is and methodologies that can be employed to complete each step.



3.1 PRE-PLANNING

A well-organized strategic planning session is key to developing a strategic plan. It is essential, therefore, that the strategic planning session be as well-organised as the strategic planning process itself. Below are a few of the first steps in organising a strategic planning session and process.

1. Select a coordinator. This person might be an election authority member or a senior member of the staff. The coordinator has the responsibility of ensuring a well-organised and focused strategic planning session.

2. Select a planning committee. It is important to have a planning committee to lead the planning



process. The planning committee is not responsible for doing all the work, but for ensuring that the work gets done. It becomes the cornerstone of the team – creating initial drafts of planning documents, distributing pre-session reading materials, selecting “break-out” groups, conducting an organisational assessment, prioritising or narrowing information for the group to discuss and evaluate. The committee serves to maintain the efficiency of the process.

The planning committee should:

- Be small
- Include a combination of individuals who see what the organisation can be and those who ask what the current organisational resources will support and ensure that the goals and tasks are realistic.
- Have the respect of the rest of the organisation.
- Include a combination of commission members and staff, including the executive director or secretary and the individual who will draft the final plan.

3. Select a facilitator. This may be the most important decision in the planning process. The facilitator has the responsibility of guiding the strategic planning process and ensuring that it stays focused. He or she should be experienced in strategic planning. A facilitator might be found at a university in the business management department or from a government public administration/management institute.

The facilitator is usually a person from outside the organisation who assists in the strategic planning process. Because many election authorities may not have access to an experienced strategic planning facilitator, the manual has been written to enable an election authority to develop a strategic plan with or without a facilitator. A senior member of the organisation’s management staff can play the role of facilitator.

4. **Work out the details.** Once the facilitator is selected, he or she should meet with the strategic planning committee and the strategic planning coordinator to work out the details of the strategic planning session. They should agree on:

- The methodology that will be employed to develop the strategic plan;
- Who will be at the strategic planning session;
- What is expected to be accomplished;
- The agenda of the strategic planning session; and
- The ground rules for the session

5. **Selection of the site.** The location is not as important as the fact that it should be away from the regular work place. This allows participants to concentrate on the strategic planning exercise and not be distracted by the day-to-day operations of the office. In selecting the site, the coordinator should consider the plenary meeting room and “break-out” rooms if the group is large. The rooms should facilitate working in the evenings and should accommodate the break-out groups having meals or snacks together.

6. **Logistics.** In addition to the above the strategic planning committee will be expected to:

- Set the dates for the exercise
- Arrange for supplies, equipment, transportation, etc.
- Arrange for interviews with participants or distribution of survey

- Prepare read-ahead material for participants
- Distribute read-ahead material

SUPPLIES	EQUIPMENT
◆ Easels — at least 2, plus one for each breakout room.	◆ Computer with word processing software
◆ Masking tape — one roll for each easel	◆ Printer and Paper
◆ Flip Chart Paper— for breakout groups	◆ Computer Disks
◆ Marking Pens	◆ Overhead Projector
◆ Transparencies	◆ Screen
◆ Dictionary & Thesaurus	◆ Fax Machine
◆ Paper, Notebooks, Pens	
◆ Name Tents	

The table above provides a list of supplies and equipment that might be needed for the planning session:

7. **Develop an Agenda.** The length of the process depends on what the group expects to accomplish. A committed group can usually draft a vision, mission statement, guiding principles, goals and outline most of the strategies and objectives in a 3-day session away from the regular office site. Appendix 8.1 on page 35 shows a sample agenda. The times are approximate and are provided as an example of what might be accomplished in a 3-day meeting.

3.2 WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

It depends on the structure of the electoral authority.

The planning process should be as inclusive as possible. It should include all commissioners, representatives of staff and other individuals who are interested in the success of the organisation. An inclusive process:

- Establishes an information exchange among management and staff
- Develops uniformity of purpose among all employees
- Incorporates objectivity into the process. Staff can identify problems and ask critical questions around which management might make assumptions – and vice versa.
- Helps build commitment to the organisation and its strategies. Individuals take ownership of the goals and effort needed to achieve objectives.
- Develops foundations for future working relationships.

Unless an organisation is very small, everyone in the organisation cannot attend the strategic planning session. Therefore, a representative group should be selected. Generally, the strategic planning session should include:

Commission Members (where the authority is a commission): The role of a commission is governance and oversight. As the entity responsible for management and governance of the organisation, its focus is on the ultimate and overarching goals and strategies necessary to achieve success. Therefore, the full commis-

sion should be involved in processing the organisational assessment information and in approval of the vision, values and priorities. In order for the plan to be a success, the commission will be required to adopt the plan as the organisational framework around which the organisation will develop its operating plans.

Staff: Executive, Representatives of Middle Managers and Supervisors, Financial and Budget Managers, Facility Managers, Human Resources Managers, Information Technology Managers, Front-line Employees. Staff is a critical component of successful planning. They are the link between the vision, mission, goals, strategies and objectives and the every day activities of the organisation. In an inclusive process, the goal is to give staff input and, at times, authority to determine the means the organisation will use to achieve goals and objectives. Participants should include individuals who have experience and knowledge about critical factors relating to the success of the organisation. ALL staff should be informed of the decisions that are made. Involving staff in the planning will:

- ◆ Ensure realism of the plan
- ◆ Encourage all levels of the organisation to adopt the organisation's vision and goals.
- ◆ Involve the organisation's future leadership in the development of its identity, goals and objectives
- ◆ Unite individual visions into a single collective vision for the organisation.

Resource Persons: Individuals who have an interest in the success of the organisation might be included to give an “outsiders” perspective on issues. Outsiders can educate the Commission and staff on the perception of the organisation in the country as well as identify areas not being addressed by the planning session. This group might include former Commissioners or senior staff and political party representatives on rare occasions.

3.3 THE ORGANISATIONAL ASSESSMENT

An organisational assessment is a basic management tool that is used in strategic planning and as a tool for policy development and problem solving. It provides a baseline assessment of the organisation. The assessment should identify the organisation’s internal strengths and weaknesses, its position, performance problems and potential (**Internal Assessment**) and external forces that affect the operating environment in which the election organisations functions (**External Assessment**). The data gathered during the assessment will lead to identification of strategic or critical issues.

The strategic planning exercise will be much more effective if all participants have an idea of what to expect. Many may not have been part of a strategic planning exercise in the past. One way to get the participants to think about the strategic planning process is for the facilitator to interview each participant and

obtain an overall assessment of the organisation.

However, where the number of participants is large or are coming from different parts of the country, an interview might not be possible. The alternative is to distribute a simple survey. The survey will help the Strategic Planning Committee, facilitator and the strategic planning coordinator to understand the current environment of the election authority and enable them to better focus the strategic planning exercise. The survey document should make it clear that the answers to the questions will be shared with the strategic planning group, but that the source of the answers will remain anonymous.

The questions on the survey might vary from electoral authority to electoral authority. Below is a list of sample questions that might be included on the survey.

The questions are not all inclusive. Each election authority should tailor the questions to fit the organisation.

1. What do you see as the main function or mission of the organisation?
2. Who are the people, and what are the organisations and institutions that our election authority serves?
3. What are the key services that our organisation provides?
4. Describe how you see the organisation in the future? Do you see the services of the organisation or the mission of the organisation changing?
5. What are the principles or moral characteristics

that should guide the organisation to attain your vision of its future? What current behaviour within the organisation needs to be changed to attain your vision?

6. How must the organisation change or evolve in order to realize your vision of the future organisation? What are the barriers to the changes you think are needed? (These can be political, administrative, financial, cultural, etc.)
7. Which major functions or processes of the organisation should be targets for improvement to help better serve the people, institutions, and organisations that we serve?
8. How do the financial resources available to the organisation affect its ability to meet its mission? What would be the effect of reduced resources? What needs to be done to ensure that the CORE functions or missions continue to be performed well?
9. Are planning, budget and other management efforts integrated?
10. If you could change just one thing to improve our organisation, what would you change?
11. What things would you like to see done away with because they are obsolete?
12. What is your opinion of the staff capabilities?
13. Are the programs (voter registration, voter education, election day, etc.) that we administer effective? How successfully are our citizen's needs in these areas being met?
14. What are the constraints in meeting our citizens needs and expectations?
15. How are the needs and expectations of our customers changing? What opportunities exist for positive change? Do our plans accommodate the

changes.?

16. How do you see our reputation in the country? What about how we manage our individual programs?
17. Are our management, information and financial systems in place adequate? How would you improve them?
18. What about our office facilities and equipment?
19. What are your expectations about the strategic planning session? What concerns do you have?
20. What questions should we have asked you about the organisation and/or the strategic planning session that we didn't?

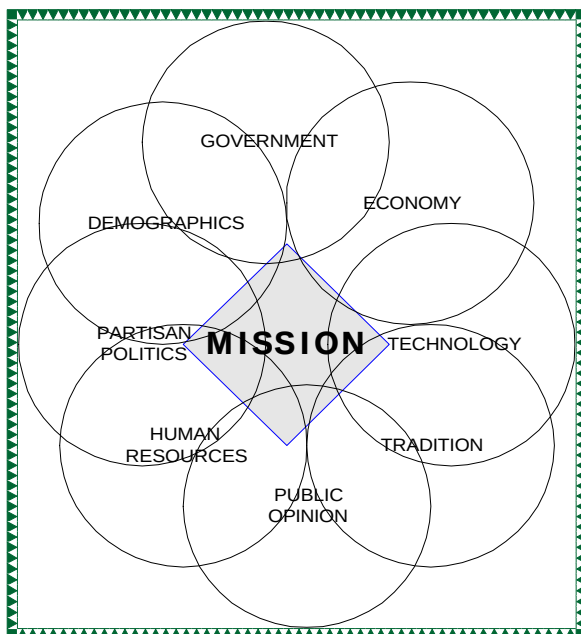
Participants should be encouraged to write down their first impression after reading the questions. They should not spend a great deal of time thinking about the answers. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions.

Note on the External Assessment: Because factors external to the election organisation often severely impact on its operations, the external assessment portion of the organisation is critically important. It is often more important to election organisations than to other departments in government where political and cultural changes do not generally generate significant impact.

Many external factors may influence an election organisation and its mission.

- ◆ What is the country's current fiscal status?

- ◆ What external factors are affecting the organisation?
- ◆ What about current issues or problems? Are these local, regional, national, or global in scope? Why are the issues important.
- ◆ What are the nation's future revenue and expenditure estimates for the next five years?
- ◆ What forces (political, economic, traditional, cultural) might affect key elements of the organisation's working environment?
- ◆ What implications do these forces hold for the organisation in the future?



- ◆ What are the most likely scenarios for the future?

The Strategic Planning Committee may find the list of internal and external assessment factors in Appendix 8.2 on page 37 helpful in conducting the organisational assessment. The factors in the list are representative of relevant issues to consider.

There are a number of sources where election organisations can obtain information to be included in their organisational assessment. Below is a partial list.

Sources for the *internal* assessment information:

- ✓ Annual reports
- ✓ Election reports
- ✓ The employee survey
- ✓ Public opinion polls
- ✓ Internal assessments of operations
- ✓ Election observer reports
- ✓ Assessments from international partners
- ✓ Program progress review meetings
- ✓ Internal databases
- ✓ Budget Requests
- ✓ Internal Planning Documents

Sources for *external* assessment information:

- ✓ National statistical reports
- ✓ World Bank/International Community reports
- ✓ Federal, State, Regional, Local legislation
- ✓ Census and Health reports
- ✓ Federal, State, Regional, Local government budgets and policy statements
- ✓ Court decisions and actions (current and past)
- ✓ Political Stakeholder policy statements
- ✓ Interest and advocacy groups
- ✓ Media (broadcast and print)

The Planning Committee, facilitator or the coordinator should prepare a document that brings together all the data from the survey and the other parts of the

organisational assessment. The document should list all of the questions and all of the answers from the participants *without attribution*. This allows everyone to see how his or her answers compare to those of everyone else. The participants will also be able to get their concerns on the table and to see where consensus or diversity lies among the group.

The data gathered during the organizational assessment will lead to identification of strategic or critical issues

The facilitator should prepare an executive summary of the assessment document. This executive summary becomes the draft vision, guiding principles, mission and planning assumptions going into the strategic planning exercise to aid in focusing the entire process. The executive summary should be a set of bullets that reflect the issues (positive and negative) as reflected in the survey. The executive summary should not state the vision, guiding principles, or mission for the organisation. The final version will be hammered out and consensus reached at the strategic planning session. The survey itself also provides the participants with an idea of what will be covered in the strategic planning session.

The executive summary becomes the draft vision, guiding principles, mission and planning assumptions going into the strategic planning exercise to aid in focusing the entire process.

Note: Once the summary document is created, the Strategic Planning Committee should consider destroying the employee survey documents. By all means, the committee should not share the source of the responses with the coordinator or any other person within election authority. In addition, the summary document and executive summary may contain information and comments that the election authority does not want disseminated throughout the organisation or to the public. A decision should be made as to whether the participants will be allowed to retain the summary document and executive summary when they return “home”.

4. The Strategic Planning Exercise

The facilitator has been hired, venue has been found, the administrative and logistics details have been worked out, the organisational assessment has been completed and the agenda developed, now it is time to develop the strategic plan. This section explains and offers some practical advice on making the process successful.

Conducting the strategic planning exercise is a challenge for the coordinator and the facilitator. The facilitator can help keep the planning process on track by explaining each step as they work through the process and checking with the coordinator, in private, to ensure that things are going well.

During the period set aside for the strategic planning session, the facilitator will want to alternate between some educational sessions that explain the process and the actual facilitated exercises used to develop the strategic plan. The amount of education needed will depend on the experience of the group in strategic planning and from information obtained from the survey process.

The following sections offer a guide to conducting the strategic planning session. Where appropriate the section provides background information about the strategic planning process.

4.1 OPENING REMARKS

The coordinator should open the session, welcome the participants, and introduce anyone who is not known to the participants. He or she should also introduce the leaders of the organisation who wish to make remarks. This is the opportunity for the leadership of the organisation to express their personal commitment to the process.

If there is an item or issue that is non-negotiable, that is, it is not open for discussion for an administrative or political reason; the item or issue should be laid on the table in the opening remarks. It is unfair to allow the participants to debate an item or an issue and then tell them it's too late to do anything about it.

4.2 ADMINISTRATIVE REMARKS

The coordinator should provide information about hotel accommodations, telephones, messages, meals, schedules, etc., and should introduce staff who will be making a record of the process in order to produce draft documents – not to record the deliberations and conversations of the group. A logistics sheet with the above information should be handed out and gone over.

4.3 STRATEGIC PLANNING OVERVIEW

This is the opportunity for the facilitator to discuss with the group the definition of and the purpose of

strategic planning and perhaps compare strategic planning with other types of planning. The facilitator should review the outcomes and benefits that come from strategic planning and how the organisation might change. He or she should also make clear that transformation takes time, which is why strategic plans in election administration have a 3 to 5 year horizon.

The strategic planning overview should also contain:

- An explanation of the strategic planning model and the fact that the team will be working on the strategic framework;
- A definition, in the simplest terms, of the meaning of vision, mission, guiding principles and planning assumptions in strategic planning. They can be discussed in detail as each is developed during the multi-day session

Sample Definitions

Vision – An idealized view of what the election authority would like to be in the future.

Mission – An enduring statement of the purpose of the election authority. The mission statement describes what the organisation does, what it does it for, and how it does it.

Guiding Principles – The values and philosophy of an election authority that guides the behaviour of its members.

Planning Assumptions – Beliefs based upon past experience and knowledge about how current and future events, both internal and external to the organisation, are likely to affect the achievement of the mission, goals and objectives of the election authority.

Depending on what information the facilitator obtained from the survey, he or she may want to discuss other aspects of the strategic planning process or to provide other definitions.

4.4 GROUND RULES

Unless the group already has a set of ground rules for the strategic planning exercise, the facilitator should probably propose and obtain agreement on a set of rules before going to work. Some groups want to develop their own set of ground rules and often spend hours or days writing them. This is not the purpose of the strategic planning session. It is best, therefore, to have some ground rules in advance. It is helpful to have them displayed on flip chart paper and hung on the wall for everyone to see. The facilitator should lead a discussion on the ground rules, take recommendations for additions and obtain consensus on the entire set of ground rules. A sample set of ground rules is provided below:

- Operate in the here and now – no distracting “war” stories
- Suspend belief and explore all possibilities
- Respect each member of the group
- Operate in a spirit of openness and inquiry
- Participate without side conversations
- Attack challenges and obstacles, not each other
- Confidentiality
- Timeliness

4.5 THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

There are many ways to arrive at a decision in a strategic planning session. Given the often-authoritarian nature of election administration some participants may expect that someone “above” will tell them what to do. Some may expect that priorities should be decided by voting. Another way to make a group decision is through consensus. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages. Voting allows the group to move forward quickly. However, it sets up a perception of winners and losers. Consensus is messier. Consensus requires that issues must be discussed, analysed, and discussed again, until the group finds a solution that everyone can live with. While it takes time, it allows the whole group to buy into the decision. It is the recommended method for the strategic planning exercise.

The facilitator should explain to the group which process will be used and use it consistently. The facilitator should not try and reach consensus on one issue and vote on another.

Note: Consensus does not mean that everyone is in 100% agreement on an issue. It means that everyone can live with the decision of the group. Even a unanimous decision does not ensure that it is a good one. Alfred Sloan, a former chairman of the General Motors Corporation, is quoted as saying, “Gentlemen, I take it we are all in agreement on the decision here...

Then I propose we postpone further discussion of this matter until our next meeting to give ourselves time to develop disagreement and perhaps gain some understanding of what the decision is all about.”

4.6 PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

The planning assumptions were developed from information contained in the survey and assessment. If the facilitator prepared an executive summary, he or she should refer the group to the summary. He should point out that the group should recognize their own words since many of the assumptions are those of the group. The facilitator might want to give the participants time to brainstorm additions, changes, or modifications to the planning assumptions they have developed.

One of the benefits of identifying planning assumptions is that the team members get what’s bothering them off their chests and onto the table. It’s a warm-up exercise that establishes a baseline for the planning exercise.

4.7 DEVELOPING A MISSION STATEMENT, VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The facilitator should lead a brainstorming session to identify whom the organisation serves, how and why. When the list is complete, the group is ready to start drafting its mission statement, vision, and guiding principles.

If the group is large, the facilitator should divide the

group into three break-out groups. One group can draft a mission statement, while the second drafts the vision statement and the third group drafts the guiding principles.

Breakout (or syndicate) groups should be small. Each group should select a facilitator, recorder, and note-taker (the one who reports of the group's work to the plenary). During each session, participants should rotate in these roles. Ideally, the breakout groups are a mix of the people attending the session. Commissioners should be setting alongside local officers for example. Breakout groups can also be made up of stakeholders within the organisation. Local, state/regional election officers might consider issues applicable to their areas of concern only.

4.7.1 Mission Statement

In just a few sentences a mission statement must communicate the essence of the election organisation to political stakeholders and to the public. Often, an organisation will want the mission statement to say more about who they are, what they are doing, and why they are doing it. Neither approach is necessarily the right one for an electoral organisation. What is important is that the mission statement reflects one guiding set of ideas that can be understood and supported by the organisation's political stakeholders, the public, the organisation's staff, government leaders, and international partners. When writing a mis-

sion statement, the group should ask itself the following questions?

1. Who are we?
2. What do we do?
3. For whom do we do it?
4. Why do we do it?
5. Why are public resources devoted to this effort?

Before starting to work on the mission statement, the facilitator should lead a mini-educational session on what a mission statement is and what should be included in the statement. Election authorities already have a mission dictated by the national constitution and/or electoral law. However, the constitution or law may not convey the essence of how the organisation sees itself. From the preplanning and assessment activities, the facilitator should be able to determine whether or not the election authority has a fairly clear sense of its mission. However, if the election authority is a fairly new one, has been recently re-organized, or has only just begun to function in a new or re-newed democracy, the facilitator may want to spend more time on this component of strategic planning. If the election authority does not have a clear sense of its mission, it will be very difficult to develop a vision.

A mission statement should include three basic concepts, purpose of the organisation, activities and programs of the organisation, and the values of the or-

organisation's members. These concepts can be summarized as follows:

Purpose: The statement should clearly state what the election organisation seeks to accomplish. Why the organisation exists and what is the ultimate result of its work. Purpose portions of the mission statement often include words such as conduct, provide, ensure, increase, prevent and eliminate.

Activities and Programs: The mission statement should outline the activities or programs the election organisation uses to attain its purpose. Activities and program portions of mission statements often include, for example, the verb "to conduct" linked with words such as "by" or "through."

Values: The mission statement should include the values that the organisation's members hold in common and attempt to put into practice. The values guide the organisation's members in performing their work. Examples of "value" words are commitment to excellent services, innovation, diversity, creativity, honesty, transparency, integrity, etc.

A good mission statement should:

- Identify the overall purpose for the existence of the election organisation as established in the constitution, statute, or executive order.
- Identify the basic needs or particular problems that the organisation is designed to address.
- Identify the election organisation's clients, users, programs, and sub-programs.

- Help identify public and political stakeholder expectations, and requirements and how the organisation meets the expectations and requirements and the processes and resources used to satisfy the requirements.
- Lead to the development of performance measures that reflect public and political stakeholder requirements.

From the preplanning and assessment activities, the facilitator should be able to determine whether or not the election authority has a fairly clear sense of its mission

4.7.2 Vision

Election authorities are faced with the challenge of delivering services with greater efficiency, effectiveness, and quality, yet it must operate within resource constraints and often in a highly charged political environment. Creating a vision can help the organisation redefine how services are provided and prepare the organisation to meet the demands of the future. A good vision statement should be:

- Brief and memorable
- Inspiring and challenging
- Describe the ideal
- Appeal to employees, the public and political stakeholders.
- Describe future service levels.
- Idealistic, standing above the commonplace.
- Enduring

In creating the vision statement, the group should ask itself:

- What does the organisation want, what are its aspirations?
- How does the organisation wish to be known by

the public, political stakeholders, employees?

- How will the organisation enhance the quality of democracy for those who m it serves?

From the executive summary, the facilitator can start by reviewing the draft vision, challenging the group through brainstorming to examine their vision in light of the definition. The vision statement should ultimately convey that it is shared, supported, detailed, and comprehensive, and is should be positive and inspiring. A basic fact is that the organisation will never be greater than the vision that guides it.

If the group is small, the group can work together to put together a first draft vision. If the group is large, the facilitator will need to divide the participants into working groups. It is best to assign each group a different task or component of the vision; otherwise they will duplicate one another's work.

The vision statement should require the organisation's members to stretch their expectations, aspirations, and performance. The statement should be appropriate, ambitious, realistic, credible, well articulated and easy to understand. It should illustrate what a successful organisation will look like. It is the pursuit of that image of success that should motivate people to work together. In short, the vision should challenge and inspire the organisation to achieve its mission.

In developing the vision statement it is often helpful for group members to come up with a metaphor that describes how he or she sees the organisation. For example: "Our organisation is like an army protecting democracy every election." The facilitator should help the group discuss what they mean and what they hope for. He or she should look for areas of agreement, as well as different ideas that might emerge. The facilitator should not try to write a vision statement with the group. Ask one or two people to try drafting the statement based on the group's discussion and bring it back for discussion and revision until the group has something that it can agree on and that the commission can agree to.

A basic fact is that the organisation will never be greater than the vision that guides it.

4.7.3 Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are the moral characteristics that reflect the values of the organisation. They are a set of statements about how the people in the organisation relate to each other and those they serve. All organisations develop values, beliefs and attitudes that guide their behaviour. In many cases, they are not obvious, but they do exist. They are part of the organisation's culture.

Describing the organisation's principles is often difficult. Principles should reflect the values and philosophy of the Commission and the executive man-

agement team, as well as the organisation's values and assumptions. The principles should be compatible and convincing for everyone inside and outside the organisation and for the public and political stakeholders. Sometimes principles are expressed in terms of the responsibilities to the public and political stakeholders, and employees. Other times principles are expressed in terms of quality or excellence in management and the delivery of services. The best statements of principles express the organisation's attitude about:

1. **People:** The way employees and the public are treated
2. **Processes:** The way the organisation is managed, decisions made, and services provided.
3. **Performance:** The expectations concerning the election organisation's responsibilities and the quality of the services it provides.

The facilitator will probably want to brainstorm with the group the inputs for the guiding principles obtained from the survey and reflected in the executive summary, adding, changing, and modifying them where appropriate. The facilitator should spend some time with the guiding principles group discussing the implications of the guiding principles on day-to-day behaviour of the organisation. The group needs to understand the implications and must be willing to commit to them before they are finally adopted. If the leaders of the organisation espouse a certain philosophy but do not practice that philoso-

phy, they will lose credibility with the workforce,

If the leaders of the organisation espouse a certain philosophy but do not practice that philosophy, they will lose credibility with the workforce, political stakeholders, and the public.

political stakeholders, and the public.

4.8 GAP ANALYSIS

Once the drafts of the vision, mission and guiding principles are available, the group can begin the development of strategic goals. This is what everyone has been waiting for, the chance to get some attention focused on their particular area of concern.

Every person in the group should be provided with a copy of the draft of the mission, vision, and guiding principles. The facilitator should ask members to look at the current state (where the organisation is now) and the future (where they want to be). The "current state" is reflected in the organisational assessment found in the executive summary, the drafted mission statement, and the knowledge of the organisation that is found in the strategic planning group. The "future" is found in the draft vision and guiding principles. The difference is the GAP.

In conducting the gap analysis the facilitator may want to create break-out teams to take various aspects of the gap analysis for thorough discussion – law, political parties, voter education, voter registra-

tion, logistics, administration, finance, communication, etc.

These same groups will address the strategic goals, strategies and objectives

in the next step.



4.9 STRATEGIC ISSUES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Strategic goals are the changes required to move the organisation toward its vision. In other words, they fill the gap identified in the previous section. They provide a framework for more detailed levels of planning. Goals are more specific than mission statements but remain general enough to stimulate innovation. They indicate the general changes that will have taken place in the organisation and its programs. Goals are long-range performance targets that are consistent with the organisation's mission. They require substantial commitments of financial and human resources, and the achievement of short-term and mid-term supporting plans. The achievement of strategic goals moves an election organisation closer to its vision. The strategy explains how the goal will be achieved. The objectives describe who will do what by when. There should be no more than five or six strategic goals for the entire organisation. This is difficult to do. The tendency is to lay all the problems on the table. Goals should

also represent immediate or serious problems or high-priority issues that require special attention. This might be some aspect of voter registration or perhaps the passage of legislation important to the organisation and the election process.

4.9.1 STRATEGIC ISSUES

The first step in developing strategic goals is to identify strategic issues. Strategic issues do not necessarily fall within the boundaries of a particular program or responsibility of the election organisation, they often impact on all operations. However, it may be possible to consolidate into key areas issues that cut across many different operational areas. The following may help in the identification of strategic issues:

Strategic issues may be addressed in the short term. (during the next fiscal year). Revision or rebuilding of a voter register might be considered a strategic issue.

Strategic issues may be generated by external forces. For example, political parties have been bribing polling station officials and this has attracted a great deal of attention in the media with calls for reform.

Strategic issues may arise as a result of the organisational assessment.

Strategic issues may be implemented over the long term. Fully furnishing all local election offices

over a five-year period or the building of a complete fleet of vehicles for example.

Strategic issues may lead to strategic planning

goals. However, just identifying the problem as a strategic issue is not the same as determining the goal or the desired result. A strategic issue may be negative media coverage. The goal may be to foster better relationships with the media or to tackle the problem creating the negative coverage.

Strategic issues may emerge and become important after the strategic plan is completed and approved.

This should pose no problem. The organisation can more easily address new strategic issues when the direction of the agency has been identified through the strategic planning process. Knowledge of what will be needed to accomplish the organisation's mission, goals, and objectives will help ensure effective allocation of existing resources to handle the challenge.

4.9.2 STRATEGIC GOALS

Each strategic break-out group should be required to ask, "What is the change (human, financial, material, cultural, political) that needs to take place to move the organisation toward its vision?" The answers should be captured on a flip chart and compiled and input into the strategic goal(s).

Below are a few criteria found in most election or-

ganisation's goals:

- Be in harmony with and clarify the organisation's vision, mission and principles.
- Goals that are achieved will fulfil, or contribute to, the mission of the organisation, its programs and operations.
- Goals will tend to remain unchanged until the desired outcome has been achieved.
- Goals normally encompass a relatively long period – at least 3 years or more. If an organisation's goals can be accomplished in fewer than three years, it may be an objective.
- Goals address the gaps between the current and the desired level of service by the organisation.
- Goals should represent a desired programme or operational result.
- Goals will chart a clear direction for the organisation, but will not set specific milestones or strategies. That's what objectives and action plans are for.
- Goals will be within the legislative authority, or have as an objective, legislation introduced to support them.
- Goals will be challenging, but realistic and achievable.

Once the strategic goals have been identified, they need to be compared with the guiding principles to make sure they can accomplish the goals (what needs to be done) through the behaviours espoused (how people will act). Only after the goals have been validated can the process of identifying strategies and objectives begin.

4.9.3 OBJECTIVES

The development of objectives is the final step in the process of the election authority determining “where it wants to be.” As opposed to goals, objectives specific, have a specific timeframe and are measurable. They represent intermediate achievements or accomplishment needed to reach the desired goal.

Objectives are specific, measurable targets for accomplishing the organisation’s goals.

Poorly Crafted Objectives:	
EXAMPLES	To Register Voters (<i>Not Specific</i>)
	To Educate Voters (<i>Not Specific</i>)
	To Reduce the Number of Spoiled Ballots
	Better Objectives
	To register 100% of all voters by 2002
EXAMPLES	All voters understand secrecy of ballot by 2003
	Reduce number of spoiled ballots by to less than 2% of all ballots cast in 2003

Examples of both poor crafted and well crafted objectives are found in the table below.

Strategy development is a combination of rational, scientific examination and educated best guesses.

Some individuals are overwhelmed by the idea of developing strategies, but it can be a fun process.

The process includes:

- examining the organisation’s strategic issues.
- determining how the organisation’s strength and skills can be best employed to address the issues.
- analysing opportunities and strengths and look-

ing for ways to synthesize the two.

- Exploring and choosing the best approaches for the organisation.

During this process it is important to ask: Does the strategy meet/address the strategic issue or area? Is this aligned with our mission? Is this approach financially viable?

One effective method of strategy generation is to list the strategic issues along with strengths of the organisation on a flip chart. The group can then brainstorm possible uses of the strengths or other skills to address the critical issues. Where an issue is critical and strength and resources are inadequate to address the issue, identify how those strengths can be built or resources found. Remember to develop a list of alternative strategies to investigate and keep in a contingency planning file.

5. The Written Plan

A strategic plan is simply a document that summarizes, in about ten to twelve pages, why the organisation exists, what it is trying to accomplish, and how it will go about doing so. The audience for the strategic plan is anyone who wants to know the organisation's most important ideas, plans, priorities, and issues. The document should educate and guide. The more concise and ordered the document, the greater the likelihood that it will be useful, used, and helpful in guiding the operations of the organisation. The strategic plan is not written during the 3 or 4-day strategic planning session. It should be drafted by the planning committee based on the results of the strategic planning session and discussed thoroughly with people who attended the strategic planning session before being submitted to the election authority for approval. Below is an example of a common format for strategic plans, along with a brief description of each of the components.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The plan should include a table of contents.

I. Introduction by the Chairperson of the Election Authority

A cover letter from the Chairperson of the Election Authority introduces the plan to the reader and provides a "stamp of approval" to the plan and demonstrates that the organisation has achieved a critical

level of internal agreement. The introduction is often combined with the executive summary.

II. Executive Summary

In one or two pages, this section should summarize the strategic plan. It should reference the mission and vision, highlight the long-range goals, note the process for developing the plan, and thank the participants involved in the process. From the executive summary the reader should understand what is most important about the organisation.

III. Mission and Vision Statements

These statements can stand alone without introductory text.

IV. Organisational Profile and History

In one or two pages, the readers should learn the story of the election organisation (key events, triumphs, and changes over time) so that he or she can understand the historical context of the plan.

V. Strategic Issues and Strategies

This section makes explicit the strategic thinking behind the plan. External readers will better understand the organisation's point of view. This section may be presented as a brief outline of ideas or as a narrative that covers several pages. It should detail

the strategic issues identified during the session and the strategies to deal with them.

VI. Program Goals and Objectives

In many ways the program goals and objectives are the heart of the strategic plan. The mission and vision answer the big questions about why the organisation exists and how it seeks to fulfil its purpose, but the goals and objectives are the plan of action – what the organisation intends to do over the next few years. This section should serve as a useful guide for operational planning and a reference for evaluation. For clarity of presentation, goals and objectives should be grouped by program activity.

VII. Management Goals and Objectives

In this section the management functions are separated from the program functions to distinguish between service goals and organisational development goals.

VIII Appendices

The reason to include any appendices is to provide needed documentation for interested readers. They should be included only to enhance the reader's understanding of the plan.

7. Implementation Plans

Once the strategic plan has been written and approved by the Commission, it must be implemented. The implementation of a strategic plan requires effective planning. Implementation plans are not developed at the strategic planning session. They are much too detailed. The election organisation's departments develop the plans. When an activity involves more than one department, a planning team composed of representatives from each affected department is usually set up to develop the plan. The department that bears the greatest degree of responsibility for the activity is designated the leader of the planning team. Following the strategic planning exercise, management should set a deadline for the writing of implementation plans.

Implementation plans are the meat of the strategic plan for the organization. They provide, in detail, how the election authority will meet its objectives, goals and mission and the organization's programs and subprograms.

Implementation plans should utilize the **SMART** principles of election administration. The plans should be:

Specific. Plans should be as specific as possible. Every person who reads the plan should know what is to be accomplished, how and when.

Wherever the accomplishment of specific tasks in the plan is required, the plans should detail the department that is responsible for the task. Internal departmental plans should detail a specific person.

Measurable. Every step of the process should be measurable. That is, specific time frames should be included for each task to be accomplished and milestone dates established so that progress in completing the task can be reviewed. Assignment of milestones will allow the election managers to quickly see where bottlenecks in implementing the plans are to be found and address them before they become large problems that affect the overall success of the strategic plan.

Achievable. Every task in the plan should be achievable within the timeframe and budget allotted in the plan. Plans that are not achievable within the timeframe and budget place the entire objective in jeopardy. For example, a procurement schedule that does not allow sufficient time for the production of the supplies and materials is not achievable. In developing the implementation plan, the organization should always ask can we do this in the time and budget allotted?

Realistic. Plans should be realistic and reflect the actual working environment in the country – physical, cultural and political. Reliance on people or institutions to perform in a timely and particular manner when they have not done so in the past is not realistic planning. Back-up plans should be in place wherever possible. In areas where people are not familiar with technology the use of sophisticated technology can prove disastrous.

Time-Phased. Everything cannot be accomplished at once. Various tasks in the implementation plan timetable logistically follow one another. Others can proceed simultaneously. Appropriate timing under country conditions means that the plans are more achievable and realistic. Failure to adhere to a realistic timetable will result in a mad scramble to accomplish tasks on time and will increase costs. For example, failure to develop specifications and award contracts in a timely fashion can mean that supplies and materials must be produced under a significantly shorter timeframe than planned or shipped by air rather than sea or overland. This can often double and even triple the cost of items, throwing the budget and the plan into disarray.

The implementation plans should also include assumptions about future conditions on which the plan is based. The planning assumptions build on the past experience of the election authority, its current activi-

ties and any projected trends or conditions that might affect the future success of the plan. An obvious example would be a specific level of funding from the government. If the conditions under the planning assumptions significantly change, the entire plan may need to be amended.

6.1 WEIGH ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

In order to develop the implementation plan, the organization's managers must determine how best to achieve the desired results. The costs, benefits and possible consequence of alternative courses of action should be evaluated. The most effective and efficient should then be selected. Looking at successful programs from other countries can prove helpful. Similar type programs within the country conducted by other agencies should not be overlooked as they provide practical in country experience.

In determining the most appropriate strategy for the implementation plan, the planning team should ask the following questions about each suggested alternative:

- Will the strategy achieve the objective?
- What are the costs?
- What are the benefits using this approach?
- Will this course of action have a positive or negative impact on the objective?
- Is our agency organized in such a way to implement this strategy? If not, how do we need to reorganize? How long with the reorganization

take.

- Are there procedural, regulatory or legal changes that need to be made to implement the strategy? If so, what are they and how long will it take for them to be implemented?
- What are the steps to implement the strategy? How long will each step take? What resources will be needed to implement each step?

In considering a strategy, the resources (money and people) required is critical. To avoid creating unrealistic expectations, planning decisions should be based on fiscal reality. Emphasis on efficient organization operations means that regardless of the current fiscal, economic, or political climate, planning should be done under the assumption that future funds will be limited.

Once the cost, benefits, constraints, and resources have been analysed the best strategy can be selected. Next, steps necessary to implement the strategy must be identified to achieve the objective. These major action steps are what will appear in the implementation plan.

6.2 PUTTING THE ACTION PLAN TOGETHER

The implementation plan is where the actual production of a program occurs. An implementation plan is targeted toward operations, procedures and processes. They detail who will do what when. In other words, who is responsible for each step and when each step is scheduled for completion.

The following process can be used in developing the implementation plan:

6.2.1 Assign responsibility for implementation of the plan

Who is in charge of implementing all the steps in the plan? Who will be accountable? In an overall implementation plan this might be the head of a particular department or a team of departments with one department (or head) as team leader. In election administration, almost all responsibilities overlap among departments. Departmental implementation plans should detail a specific employee.

6.2.2 Identify specific steps in the plan

Each step should be briefly described and identify the department, team, or individual responsible for the step. Each step should have an estimated date when the step will begin and an ending date when the step is expected to be accomplished.

6.2.3 Set a time for completion of the overall plan.

In setting the time for completion of the overall plan, ask the following questions:

1. In the context of the overall strategic plan, when should the implementation plan be accomplished?
2. Does the department, team or person who is responsible, think that the plan can be accomplished in the given timeframe? If not, the plan needs to be adjusted accordingly.
3. Is the overall timeframe consistent with the time

needed to complete individual steps? If not, the plan needs to be adjusted.

4. Is the overall timeframe consistent with the timeframes for the completion of other objectives, goals, and implementation plans of the organization?

In practice, it may be necessary to set the dates for each step in the plan before an overall timeframe can be developed.

Determine the fiscal impact of the plan and identify the necessary resources to carry it out. This is sometimes called a fiscal impact statement.

The department, team or individual should develop the fiscal impact statement for the plan. The fiscal impact statement becomes the basis for developing requests for funds and supports human and information technology resource management.

6.2.4 Putting the Plans on Paper

There is no set rule on how implementation plans should be written. The key is to keep the wording simple, detailed and clear. One method of writing an implementation plan is to develop a numbering system to identify each goal, objective and action step.

For example:

- Goals could be numbered 1, 2, 3, etc.
- Objectives could correspond to each goal and be number 1.1 or 1-1.
- Steps could be numbered 1.1.1 or 1-1-1 to correspond to the goal and objective to which the step

is related.

The number system does not necessary need to correspond to the importance of the goal or the order in which the goals will be accomplished. Some election organizations prefer to develop a form for the implementation plans. A form sometimes helps managers to track and monitor progress. A sample implementation plan form is shown in Appendix 8.3 on page 38.

The larger the program the more steps required. The sample in the Appendix provides only a short sample. A realistic implementation plan would require hundreds of steps. Also note that in only a few instances is one person named as responsible in the plan. They are listed in teams. The department head most responsible for the step or task should head the team. The other department heads provide support.

An implementation plan can be used for any type of program or activity of the organization. A good first exercise in learning how to develop an implementation plan is to develop a plan for your strategic planning exercise.

6.3 MONITORING PROGRESS

There's an old saying: "what gets measured, gets done." In election administration, unless the election authority establishes a process to measure progress in the meeting of goals and objectives and to determine

whether steps in the implementation plans are completed as scheduled, it is doomed to constantly operate in a crisis mode.

Unlike many agencies in government, an election authority's goals and objectives can be clearly focused. The means to monitor whether progress is being made are quite simple. For the most part, specific actions must be taken within specific timeframes. Unlike, for example, a Health Ministry where a goal might be to immunize 70% of all babies against polio over a three year period. In this instance, the rate of immunizations must be monitored over time and adjustments made in the schedule from year to year if it appears that the goal will not be met. Election administrators, on the other hand, must always make 100% voter registration and 100% participation in the next election their over-riding goals. It is difficult to imagine a reputable election authority establishing a goal of 70% of all eligible citizens to registered to vote — eliminating 30% of citizens from participating in the political process.

This is not to say that election authorities never have goals that are accomplished over time. For example goals of an election organization might be:

- Within three years every citizen understands the concept of a secret ballot. This type of objective might be accomplished through voter education in phases in different parts of the country at different times.
- Every local election office will have a telephone/fax and furniture within five years. This type of objective might mean furnishing a percentage of offices each year.

Regardless of whether the goal or objective is election driven or can be accomplished over time, there is a need to measure progress in reaching the goal or accomplishing the objective. Measuring progress:

Is good management. It helps managers know what is happening in their organization, department or unit.

Enhances the quality of the work done or service provided. Employees who understand that their progress and performance will be measured tend to perform at a higher standard. Numerous studies have shown that employees want to live up to what is expected of them. If excellence is expected, excellence is the result. If mediocrity is expected, mediocre performance results.

Assists in budget development and review. When goals and objectives are time driven, they often fall into different yearly budget cycles. Monitoring performance means that the budget and budget requests can be adjusted to meet the goals and objectives.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, MONITORING PROGRESS AND MEASURING PERFORMANCE ENSURES RESULTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY. KEY COMPONENTS OF QUALITY ELECTION ADMINISTRATION.

6.3.1 ESTABLISHING MEANINGFUL MONITORING MEASURES:

As noted earlier, much of the work of election authorities is election driven based on a rigid election cycle. For those goals and objectives that fall into the time driven category the most common performance measure is:

Was the goal, objective, or step accomplished as scheduled?

However, waiting until the end of the process to ask the question sets the process up for failure. There are many intermediate milestones that must be passed in accomplishing a goal, meeting an objective or completing a step. It is critical to the successful implementation plan to establish milestones to judge progress.

Milestones should provide opportunities to judge progress and to make necessary adjustments in the management of the process. Milestones also free managers from performing day to day oversight of progress on all components of the plan at all times. Departments and/or employees can report at regular and agreed intervals. This allows the election manager to concentrate on problem areas. Areas going well need less of the manager's attention.

Managers at each level should establish with the person responsible for an objective or step, agreed upon dates for reporting, what will be reported and how. Reporting should be frequent enough to provide the

manager with a view of progress, but not so frequent that little is accomplished between reporting dates. Through the effective use of reporting milestones, election administrators can be assured, in most instances, of meeting targeted objectives.

6.3.2 MEASURES FOR OBJECTIVES ACCOMPLISHED OVER TIME

As noted above, not all objectives of an election authority are time drive. Some may be accomplished over time. For those objectives a set of measures is required.

The first step in measuring performance for non-election driven objectives is to establish exactly what is to be measured, the source of the data and how the value is being accomplished. Definitions that are clear and specific are not open to interpretation and ensures that the staff will be able to provide accurate information.

The next step is to establish baseline data. This information is then used to measure progress. To use the example above on the right to a secret ballot, the baseline might be established through a national public opinion survey or through focus groups to determine the present level of understanding.

6.3.3 KEYS TO SETTING MILESTONES AND MEASURING PROGRESS:

Regardless of whether the objective or step is election driven or accomplished over time, there are a

few basic rules to follow in establishing monitoring and measurement structures. They should

- be developed together with those who will be held accountable;
- include, wherever possible, the views of political stakeholders;
- represent realistic expectations toward meeting the goals and objectives;
- be adjusted based on gained experience and expectations;
- enhance productivity; and
- include a number of milestones leading up to a final target.

The process of developing, updating and reporting on meeting goals and objectives is dynamic and requires the ongoing attention of the election managers. The process should be accepted as evolutionary and that the process will improve with experience.

8. References

The following reference materials were used in the development of this manual

Baxter, J. (1994), *Techniques for Effective Election Administration*, United Nations

Brassard M. (1989). *The memory jogger plus+*. Methuen, MA: GOAL/QPC

Deming, W. E. (1993). *The new economics for industry, government, education*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

US Department of the Navy. (1993). *Total Quality Implementation Survey*. Washington, DC. D. Wells, Author

Goodstein, L. D., Nolan, T. M., & Pfeiffer, J. W. (1992). *Applied strategic planning: A comprehensive guide*. San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer & Co.

Janis, Irving L. (1972). *Preventing group think. Victims of groupthink*. New York. Houghton Mifflin.

Bradford, R., Duncan P., (2000) *Simplified Strategic Planning*. Worcester, MA. Chandler House Press.

8. Appendices

8.1 SAMPLE AGENDA

DAY ONE		
Time	Event	Person
0800	Opening Remarks	Coordinator
0830	Introduction of participants	Coordinator
0845	Administrative Remarks –Lodging, Meals, etc.	Coordinator
0930	Break	
0945	Strategic Planning Overview	Facilitator
10:30	Ground Rules	Facilitator
11:00	Planning Assumptions	Facilitator
12:00	Lunch	
13:00	Recap of Morning Session—Re-Focus	Facilitator
13:15	Development of Mission Statement	Facilitator
14:45	Break	
15:00	Development of Vision	Facilitator
16:00	Development of Guiding Principles	Facilitator
17:00	Summary of day's accomplishments, explanation of day two	Facilitator/Coordinator
DAY TWO		
0800	Opening Remarks	Coordinator
0815	Re-cap and Re-focus	Facilitator
0830	Gap Analysis	Facilitator
10:00	Break	

Time	Event	Person
10:15	Groups Report Back	Rapporteurs
12:00	Lunch	
13:00	Re-cap and Re-focus	Facilitator
13:15	Small groups breakout to identify strategic issues	Facilitator
14:30	Break	
15:00	Groups present final drafts	Rapporteurs
17:00	Summary of day's accomplishments and explanation of day three	Facilitator

DAY THREE

0800	Opening Remarks	Coordinator
08:15	Re-cap and Re-focus	Facilitator
08:30	Break-out groups continue to work on strategic issues	Facilitator
10:00	Break	
10:15	Identification of Strategic Goals by Break-out Groups	Facilitator
12:00	Lunch	
13:00	Breakout Groups identify Strategic Objectives	Facilitator
15:00	Next Steps	Facilitator
17:00	Closing Remarks	Facilitator/Coordinator

8.2 SOURCES FOR ORGANISATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Internal: Strengths and Weakness	External: Strengths and Weaknesses
1. Overview of Organisation Scope and Functions ▪ Enabling National Statutes, date signed into law ▪ Historical perspective, significant events ▪ Public/Political Stakeholder expectations, public image ▪ Structure of programs and sub-programs ▪ Organisation accomplishments ▪ Examination of existing performance measures 2. Organisational Aspects ▪ Size/composition of workforce (number of employees, professional, technical, clerical, etc.) ▪ Organisational structure and processes (divisions/departments, key management policies/operating characteristics, quality and management style) ▪ Location of organisation's main office, state/region offices, location of service/regulation populations ▪ Human resources (training, experience, compensation/benefits, turnover rates, morale) ▪ Capital assets, capital improvement needs ▪ Information technology (IT); degree of agency automation, telecommunications, quality of agency IT plans, data collection, tracking and monitoring systems ▪ Key organisational events and areas of change, impact on organisation, organisation responsiveness to change	1. Demographics, focus on public and political stakeholders ▪ Characteristics (age, gender, culture, language, special needs, political, etc.) ▪ Trends and their impact (population shifts, emerging demographic characteristics, etc.) ▪ HIV/AIDS (economic, workforce, political stability, by elections, security) 2. Economic Variables ▪ Unemployment rate ▪ Extent to which population's service needs are affected by economic conditions (transport to and from registration centres/polling stations, ability to acquire TV & radios, etc.) ▪ Expected future economic conditions and impact on election organisation, population, and political stakeholders ▪ National fiscal forecast and revenue estimates ▪ Election organisation response to changing economic conditions
3. Fiscal Aspects ▪ Size of budget (trends in appropriations and expenditures, significant events, etc.) ▪ Funds, national, state/regional, fees, etc. ▪ Comparison of operating costs with other election organisations ▪ Relationship of budget to program/subprogram structure ▪ Degree to which budget meets current and expected needs, internal accounting procedures	3. Impact of "Other" Government Statutes and Regulations ▪ Key Legislation, key events, etc. ▪ Current government activities (identification of relevant government entities, relationship to election organisation, impact on election organisation operations, etc.) ▪ State/Regional legislative mandates or requirements on election organisation ▪ Anticipated impact of future government actions on election organisation (law changes, court cases, special requirements, etc.)
	4. Other Legal Issues ▪ Impact of anticipated national legislative changes ▪ Impact of State/Regional legislative changes ▪ Impact of local government requirements ▪ Impact of legislation directed at political stakeholders ▪ Court Cases
	5. Technological Developments ▪ Impact of technology on current election operations (services, productivity, telecommunications, etc.) ▪ Impact of anticipated technological advances
	6. Public Policy Issues ▪ Current events

8.3 SAMPLE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Goal:	To provide every qualified citizen the opportunity to participate in the election process.		
Objective:	To register 100% of all eligible citizens by 31 December 2001.		
Strategy:	Open and staff not less than 120,000 registration centres throughout the nation.		
	Institute a comprehensive nationwide voter education programme.		
STEPS	Person(s) Responsible	Due Date or Time Line	Resources Re-quired
Identify and create database of all centres used in last election	Dir. Operations	15 April 2000	Details from LGEOs.
Assess where centres should be relocated or established.	Dir. Operations	30 April 2000	Recommendations from LGEOs
Develop specification for materials to be used.	Dir. Operations Dir. Training Dir. Procurement	1 May 2000	Specification from previous exercises Information of products available on market
Develop human resource requirements.	Dir. Operations Dir. Personnel Dir. Training	1 May 2000	Details from previous exercises List of materials to be used.
Develop logistics requirements.	Dir. Logistics Dir. Operations Dir. Procurement	30 May 2000	Location of sites List of materials and quantities Proposed dates
Develop training needs requirements.	Dir. Training Dir. Operations	15 May 2000	Details of process Human Resources Report List of Materials
Develop voter education requirements.	Dir. Voter Ed.	15 May 2000	Reports from previous exercise Listings of radio/ TV print media. Reports on education levels.

This represents only sample. A true implementation plan would include scores of steps to reach the meet the desired objective and reach the desired goal. The importance of an implementation plan is to identify all of the known steps and issues and assign responsibility for each.

About the Author

Joe C. Baxter began his career in election administration in 1974 in New Orleans (Orleans Parish) Louisiana, USA. In 1983, he joined the District of Columbia Board of Elections and Ethics in Washington, DC as Registrar of Voters. During his tenure with the D. C. Board, he was instrumental in transforming the election administration system of Washington from the worst managed system in the United States to a model system. In June 1994, Baxter joined the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) as its Chief Electoral Officer. In October 1994, he joined the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) as Project Manager for the Supporting the Electoral Process (STEP) project in Ghana. The 2.5 year project assisted the Electoral Commission of Ghana in developing its internationally recognized voter registration system and assisted in the planning for the 1996 Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Since 1997, Baxter has been Senior Advisor for Election Administration for IFES. He has travelled to 18 different countries on technical assessment and assistance missions and election observation missions for IFES and the United Nations. Current, he is assigned to the Federal Republic of Nigeria where he is assisting the Independent National Election Commission in developing its 3-year strategic plan and its program for compilation of a new voters' register.

Baxter holds a BA degree in Political Science from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Arkansas, USA.