

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning determines what a city wants to do over the next year or more, how it's going to get there and how it'll know if it got there or not. Cities need to make decisions on allocating its resources to accomplish what they want to do. These decisions include how to allocate capital and employee's time.

Three steps to strategic planning include:

1. Conducting a scan, review, or survey of the city's environment (for example, of the political, social, economic, technical environment and changing demographics).
2. Developing goals describing what the city must do as a result of the major issues and opportunities facing the organization. Goals should be worded to be specific, measurable, acceptable (to those working to achieve the goals), realistic, timely.
3. Determining how the goals will be accomplished by specifying objectives, action steps, responsibilities and timelines for each strategic goal. It should also include methods to monitor and evaluate the plan, which includes creating a process to determine and report on who has accomplished an objective and when.

It's common to develop an annual plan (sometimes called the operational plan or management plan), which includes the strategic goals, strategies, objectives, responsibilities and timelines that should be done in the coming year. Often, organizations will develop plans for each major function, division department, etc., and call these work plans.

Usually, budgets are included in the strategic and annual plan, and with work plans. Budgets specify the money needed for the resources that are necessary to implement the annual plan. Budgets also depict how the money will be spent, for example, for human resources, equipment, materials, etc. There are several different kinds of budgets.

- Operating budgets are usually budgets associated with major activities over the coming year.
- Project budgets are associated with major projects, for example, constructing a building, developing a new program or product line, etc.
- Cash budgets depict where cash will be spent over some near term, for example, over the next three months (this is very useful in order to know if you can afford bills that must be paid soon).
- Capital budgets are associated with operating some major asset, for example, a building, automobiles, furniture, computers, etc.

The UMRDC can help facilitate and develop a strategic plan for the city, county, a department, or a quasi-public entity like an EDA. Costs range depending on the time required by our staff to complete your project and what the final product will be (a written document, a presentation etc). We would be happy to meet with you to listen to your ideas and then would be able to develop a cost estimate customized for your needs.

Comprehensive Planning

A comprehensive plan is a document used by a city or county to plan for the future. This plan dictates public policy in a variety of topics relative to their jurisdiction. Topics are identified by involving various community leaders, community organizations, and ordinary citizens. Once issues

have been identified by a community, goals can then be established that help community leaders make future decisions which will affect the city.

Comprehensive plans typically cover a long-term time horizon (20 years) and cover a broad range of topics like:

- Agriculture
- Land Use
- Utilities
- Communication
- Business/Economic Development
- City/County Services
- Housing
- Natural Resources/Parks/Recreation
- Energy
- Transportation

The community needs to adopt the plan as an official statement of policy in order for it to take effect. This is usually done by the City Council or County Board of Commissioners and through public hearings. Once the plan is adopted it is then a legal statement of community policy in regards to future development.

A comprehensive plan is not a permanent document. It can be changed and rewritten over time. It is often necessary to revise or update the comprehensive plan every five to ten years in order for the comprehensive plan to be relevant to the community.

The basis for comprehensive planning comes from the government's ability to protect the health and welfare of its citizens. The power for local governments to plan generally comes from state planning enabling legislation; however, local governments in most states are not required by law to engage in comprehensive planning.

It must be noted, however, that a comprehensive plan is not usually legally binding. A community's ordinances must be amended in order to legally implement the provisions required to execute the comprehensive plan.

The UMRDC can develop or update a comprehensive plan for a city or county. The cost for services depends on the depth and needs of the work to be done. Full new comprehensive plans cost \$40,000 or more, updates to plans or certain portions of plans can cost as little as a few thousand dollars. We would be happy to meet with you to determine what you want and need and then would be able to develop a cost estimate customized for your project.

Grant Writing

A variety of funding sources are available to assist cities or counties with their initiatives. Private, state and federal monies are available based on a competitive process of completing a compelling and thorough application for funds. Grant funds change regularly and there is no one listing for all the grant funds that are available. Websites like www.Grants.gov and www.Recovery.gov list federal grants that are available. State agencies all have their own information listed on their websites www.state.mn.us . Local and private grants may be listed in certain directories like www.mcf.org or have local contacts and processes that need to be identified. A few items to think about when considering grants:

Planning and writing of a grant is not typically eligible to be reimbursed by a grant. These costs are paid for up front without the guarantee that the grant will be successful.

Match – each funding source has a different requirement for matching funds. Some match can be in-kind donated time and services but most often a cash match is required. A documentation of local match is usually required when completing an application- a letter or resolution stating the funds will be available is usually sufficient.

Getting the money – most funds are now reimbursement based. This means the city or county must pay for all the expenses out of their own funds and then prepare a detailed report documenting the funds have been spent properly. This can create a cash flow problem and it should be taken under consideration.

Administration – there are many specific rules and regulations that must be followed when a grant has been awarded in order to be eligible to get the funds that were promised. The ability to monitor, understand, and implement these requirements is often overlooked and requires a lot of time and expertise. You must decide who has the capacity to take on these roles and responsibilities. The UMVRDC is often hired to complete the administration portion of the grant because of our expertise in managing the rules and regulations and our existing positive relationship with many state and federal agencies. Sometimes the cost for administering the grant can be included in the overall cost of the grant, other times these costs need to be paid with local funds.

Common grants for cities and counties:

Mn Dept. Of Employment and Economic Development: Small Cities Development Program

The program helps develop viable communities by providing financial assistance for decent, safe, affordable housing, economic development, and public facility needs; and a suitable living environment by expanding economic opportunities, principally benefiting low- to moderate-income households. Funded projects must, at a minimum, meet one of three federal objectives: benefit low- and moderate-income persons; prevent or eliminate slum and blight conditions; or alleviate urgent community development needs caused by existing conditions that pose a serious and immediate threat to the health and/or welfare of the community.

U.S. Economic Development Administration: Public Works and Economic Development Program

Public Works and Economic Development investments help support the construction or rehabilitation of essential public infrastructure and facilities necessary to generate or retain private sector jobs and investments, attract private sector capital, and promote regional competitiveness, including investments that expand and upgrade infrastructure to attract new industry, support technology-led development, redevelop brownfield sites and provide eco-industrial development.