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# From Mission to Action:

## Strategic Planning for Healthcare Boards



MISSION



STRATEGY



GOALS



IMPLEMENTATION



IMPACT

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# Agenda

**01 The Board's Role in Strategic Planning**

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**02 Core Components of an Effective Strategic Plan**

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**03 Applying Strategic Planning to Rural and Public Health Challenges**

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**04 The Strategic Plan as an Ongoing Governance Tool**

# What is Strategic Planning?

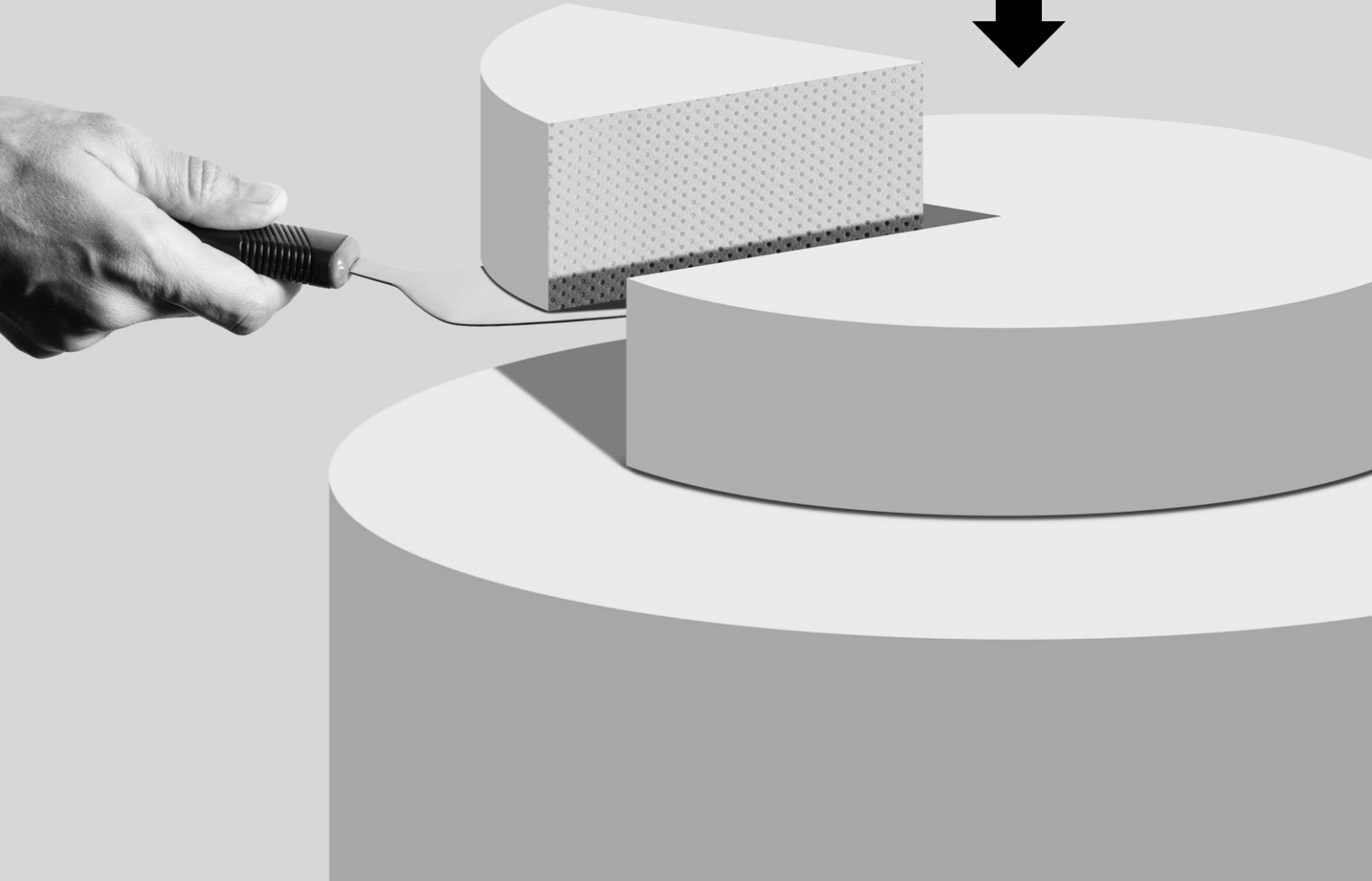
“Strategic planning is the board and management team’s attempt to create the health center’s future, achieve its vision, advance its mission, and exert some influence over an uncertain future.” *National Association of Community Health Centers*

# Strategic Planning—Why Have It?

- For Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), board-level strategic planning must be done at least once every 3 years as a condition of their funding.
- Local boards of health are expected to engage in annual planning activities, submitting an annual plan of operations or program plan to the State.
- Certain types of accreditation, Public Health Accreditation Board for example, require strategic planning.
- Certain grant funding also require planning documents with measurable goals and outcomes.
- It is best practice and can help advance the mission and goals of your organization.



## Your Organization's Capacity



You only have so much:

- time
- money in your budget
- staff hours
- leadership attention
- Each project or initiative takes a slice.
- How do you know how to allocate resources or address your community's needs (which projects get a slice of pie)?

**Answer: Strategic Planning**



# **The Board's Role in Strategic Planning**

# Governance vs. Management

The board is responsible for **governance**:

- High-level oversight, not day-to-day management
- Approving bylaws and key policies
- Ensuring its own functioning through effective meetings and committees
- Supporting a positive reputation for the organization
- Assisting in the development of short and long-term strategic planning.

Big picture vs. “getting in the weeds”



# Governance is Driven by Fiduciary Duties



## Duty of Care

Make informed decisions about the organization's future



## Duty of Loyalty

Act in the best interest of the organization



## Duty of Obedience

Ensure alignment with mission and legal requirements

**You cannot fulfill any of these duties well without engaging in strategic planning.**

# National Association of Community Health Centers 2019 Governance Guide for Health Center Boards

## Board /Governance

## CEO/Management

	<b>Board /Governance</b>	<b>CEO/Management</b>
<b>Strategic Board Composition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures its own strategic composition</li> <li>• Ensures composition complies with requirements of the Health Center Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports board in ensuring its strategic composition, has voice in recruitment</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Planning and Strategic Thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participates in establishing the strategic plan</li> <li>• Approves strategic plan</li> <li>• Monitors progress of strategic plan</li> <li>• Engages in ongoing strategic thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engages board and staff, as well as other stakeholders, in developing strategic plan</li> <li>• Implements strategic plan with staff</li> <li>• Works with board chair to include strategic issues on board agendas</li> </ul>




**Strategic planning often gets crowded out by other governance issues.**

- Reviewing and approving minutes
- Management Reports
- Financial statements and cash flow concerns
- Compliance updates
- Quality reporting
- Dashboards and metrics
- Operational fires to put out

**Strategy becomes “whatever time is left.”**

# The Board Should:

- Ensure growth and priorities align with mission
- Assess financial sustainability and ensure resources align with need
- Evaluate risks and risk tolerance
- Approve changes in programming or scope
- Provide oversight and accountability
- Ask strategic questions



**The board should be careful not to micromanage or undermine management in the strategic planning process.**

- **This can look like:**
  - Directing staff instead of going through the Executive Director/CEO
  - Asking for excessive operational detail
  - Wanting approval over day-to-day activities or routine management decisions

**The board sets direction, asks questions, and monitors results.**

**Management designs and executes the plan.**

# Questions for Board Members to Ask

- Where are we making the greatest impact—and where are we not?
- What data supports this new program or strategic priority?
- What risks does this pose to our mission or compliance?
- How will we measure progress?

# Scenario

A small rural health organization is experiencing declining patient volume, difficulty recruiting providers, and increasing regulatory requirements. The board has not updated its strategic plan in nearly three years and primarily focuses on immediate financial pressures.

- What strategic risks should concern the board most?
- What questions should the board be asking leadership?
- What *should not* be handled at the board level?



# **Core Components of an Effective Strategic Plan**

# Logistical Components

- Dedicated time
- Facilitator
- Documentation support
- Key participants
- Expected timeline



# Sample Strategic Planning Timeline

- Leadership team completes SWOT analysis in strategic planning session (DATE)
- Board of Directors strategic planning session (DATE)
- Goals, objectives, and key performance indicators are developed based on information from both strategic planning sessions (DATE)
- Goals, objectives, and key performance indicators are presented to the Board of Directors for discussion and approval (DATE)
- Draft strategic plan is developed, including the approved goals, objectives, and key performance indicators (DATE)
- Strategic plan presented to the Board of Directors (DATE)
- Senior leadership reports out quarterly to the Board on progress and key performance indicators (ongoing)

# List of Strategic Plan Elements

- Mission, Vision, and Values
- Situational/Environmental Analysis
- Focus Areas
- Goals and Objectives
- Strategies and Action Plans
- Resource Allocation
- KPIs and Evaluation

# Mission, Vision, and Values

- **Mission** – The organization’s compass. Why your organization exists and what you hope to accomplish.
- **Vision**- A statement that inspires action and guides long-term thinking.
- **Values**- Your organization’s core ethical beliefs and behaviors.

State these at the beginning of your strategic plan and have them available for reference throughout the planning process.



# Situational/Environmental Analysis

- This assesses internal strengths/weaknesses and external opportunities/threats (SWOT).
- Internal factors (mission, resources, finances, leadership, staffing)
- External factors (policy changes, workforce, competition, community needs)
- Data regarding patients, access, quality, finances
- This section is about knowing yourself, your market, and the community you serve. It grounds the rest of your discussion in reality.

# SWOT Analysis Matrix

## INTERNAL FACTORS

### STRENGTHS +

- What do we do well?
- What do patients say they like about us?
- In what areas are we better than our competitors?
- What is unique about our services or organization?
- What assets do we have?

### WEAKNESSES –

- What can we improve?
- What are our patients dissatisfied with?
- Where do we fall behind our competitors?
- Where are we lacking in knowledge or resources?

## EXTERNAL FACTORS

### OPPORTUNITIES +

- What emerging trends can we take advantage of?
- Which adjacent areas might we tap into?
- Are there geographic locations with less competition?

### THREATS –

- What is our competition doing?
- How could our weaknesses leave us vulnerable?
- What market trends are we unprepared for?
- What economic or political issues could impact our business?

# Focus Areas

- High level themes or priorities based on the previous analysis that help organize your initiatives.
- 3-5 major focus areas (less is more)
  - Access to care
  - Workforce stability
  - Financial sustainability
  - Quality outcomes
  - Growth or service expansion

# A Note for FQHCS

The Health Center Program Compliance Manual states the Board must conduct “long-range/strategic planning at least once every 3 years, which at a minimum addresses financial management and capital expenditure needs.”

OSV will review the strategic planning or related documents from within the past 3 years.

# Goals and Objectives

- For each priority you want to set specific goals with clear outcomes.
- For example: If your Focus is “Access to Care”, your Goal and Objective may be “Increase patient access” → Reduce wait times by X%, increase visits by Y%
- These should be measurable and attainable (realistic given time and resources).

# Goals and Objectives Example

**Goal Statement:** Improve Employee Recruitment and Retention and Address Burnout

**Objectives:** 1) Reduce employee turnover rate by 5% within three years; and 2) decrease reported instances of employee burnout by offering staff educational sessions on employee well-being.

# Strategies and Action Plans

- This element includes specific, actionable steps, initiatives, or tactics designed to achieve the objectives.
- It moves the plan from “vision” to “execution.”
- Each action step should state who is responsible for completion and give a timeline for completion.
- The board approves these strategies and monitors progress, while the staff implements the strategies.

# Strategy Example

## Strategy:

- 1) Calculate the annual turnover rate and compare it against previous years to assess improvements following strategic interventions (**HR Director**);
- 2) Use annual anonymous surveys to measure self-reported burnout levels among staff, comparing results over time to evaluate the effectiveness of wellness and support programs. (**HR Director and CMO**)

# Resource Allocation

- This element outlines the budget, time, and personnel required for implementation.
- The board ensures the budget aligns with the strategy by asking the right questions and monitoring whether resources are being used effectively.
- Management develops the budget and staffing plan and implements it.

# Key Performance Indicators and Evaluation

- Use metrics and key performance indicators to track progress and adjust the plan as needed.
- The KPIs should be tied to your strategy and based on measurable data whenever possible.
- The board approves the KPIs and receives updates on performance.
- Management collects and analyzes the data.
- **KPI Example:** Annual turnover rate and employee well-being survey results

# Components Review

**Where are we going?** → Mission and goals

**What will we actually do?** → Strategy and action plan

**How will we know we're succeeding?** → KPIs and metrics

**What will it take?** → Resources

**How will we stay on track?** → Governance review and set timelines



# **Applying Strategic Planning to Rural and Public Health Challenges**

# Realities of Healthcare

- The healthcare realm is complex, constantly evolving, and unpredictable.
- Community needs change, funding shifts, and regulatory expectations change.
- Patient and community needs are almost unlimited. Resources are not.

# People and Workforce Challenges

- Difficulty recruiting, especially providers, nurses, behavioral health staff
- High turnover and reliance on temporary staff
- Aging and retiring workforce
- Burnout from chronic understaffing

# Patient and Community Needs

- Rising demand for mental health services
- Opioid and polysubstance use/overdose prevention
- Limited access to treatment and specialty care, especially in rural regions
- Transportation barriers
- Chronic disease burden (diabetes, hypertension)
- Socioeconomic barriers (housing, food insecurity)

# System Pressures

- Reporting requirements (federal and state reporting, quality metrics)
- Compliance demands
- Staff time diverted from care to paperwork
- Hospital closures
- Limited specialty services
- Fewer community resources overall



# The Strategic Plan as an Ongoing Governance Tool

# Red flags that a strategic plan may not be effective:

- The plan hasn't been updated in 3+ years
- Goals aren't tied to measurable outcomes
- Board only sees the plan at retreat/strategic planning session time
- No regular progress reporting

**A strategic plan should be a living governance tool, not a binder on a shelf.**

# Reframe the Role of Your Strategic Plan

- The strategic plan is not just a document for the board to approve and file away. It is a tool the board uses to guide and oversee the organization.
- Follow-through is crucial. The plan should be revisited and updates should be given on progress.



# Ways to Integrate the Plan into Board Meetings

- Include a standing strategic plan agenda item
- Do regular reporting through quarterly reviews or updates
- Complete an annual review of the plan
- Include the plan as part of new board member orientation

# Adjusting the Plan

- “The world changes continuously and rapidly. It's foolhardy to believe that strategies should not do so as well.” *The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution: Real-Time Strategic Planning in a Rapid Response World* by David La Piana

# Long-term plans can quickly become irrelevant based on changes in areas such as:

- **Law** (government shutdowns, Medicaid funding restrictions, 340B Pharmacy reform)
- **Funding** (change in reimbursement rates, loss of grant funding, inflation)
- **Workforce** (staff turnover, loss of key leadership, inability to recruit)
- **Emerging public health issues** (COVID-19, substance use trends, aging population)
- **Competition** (new provider enters the area, local provider expands services)

# Governance Questions for Board Members to Ask

- Are we periodically monitoring progress on the organization's strategic plan?
- Is our strategic plan improving outcomes and having the desired effect or does our strategy need to be adjusted?
- Are we incorporating time for strategic conversations in our board meetings or retreats?

# Closing Thoughts

What is one thing you could do as management or a board member to strengthen strategic oversight in the next six months?

Where do you see the greatest unmet need in your community—and how might your organization rise to meet it?

What is one priority that, if you get it right, could truly transform your organization's impact?





**Questions?**

# Helpful Resources

- **PHAB Strategic Planning & Population Health Landing Page:** <https://phaboard.org/services/our-solutions/strategic-planning/>
- **PHAB Strategic Plan Template:** <https://phaboard.org/resource-library/strategic-plan-template/>
- **NACHC Health Center Boards & Strategy Landing Page:** <https://www.nachc.org/topic/health-center-boards-strategy/>
- **National Council of Nonprofits Strategic Planning for Nonprofits Landing Page:** <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/running-nonprofit/strategic-planning-nonprofits>