The Muttart Fellowships

The Garden Patch

An Organic Approach to Planning For the Voluntary Sector

Anne E. Campbell

Each item in The Muttart Fellowship Products Series carries “the look” designed for the program. The concept incorporating pebbles and water fits with the Zen-like qualities of the visual identity of the Fellowship Program.

Each front-cover pebble is different—representing the uniqueness of each fellow and what s/he has to offer. Applicants are like pebbles among pebbles. After each is refreshed and renewed through the Fellowship year, s/he has an impact on the nonprofit charitable sector like the rings the pebble creates on a pond of water.

The varied use of this design recognizes the individuality of the Fellows while also creating a unified look to the Muttart Fellowship Products Series.

The Muttart Fellowship Program—unique in Canada—was created in 1996. A project of The Muttart Foundation, a private foundation based in Edmonton, Alberta, the program is designed to:

- develop research and other materials that will benefit the charitable sector in Canada.

- provide senior managers within the social-services sector with an opportunity for a sabbatical year—a chance to recharge and renew themselves.

Up to five fellowships are awarded each year to people working in senior-management positions in social-service charities within the Foundation's funding area—Alberta, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, and Yukon.

During the Fellowship year, the Fellow leaves his or her agency to work on the chosen project. The Foundation makes a grant equal to the salary and benefit costs for the Fellow's position, and provides a budget for expenses related to the project. At the end of the Fellowship year, the Fellow returns to his or her agency for at least a year.

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An Organic Approach to Planning For the Voluntary Sector

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

"The design principles of our future social institutions must be consistent with the principles of organization that nature has evolved to sustain the web of life."

- Fitjof Capra, *The Hidden Connections*

Dedication

To the board of directors of the YWCA of Saskatoon; generous and spirited women who volunteer to govern with vision and commitment in order to build a more civil and just society.

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In Gratitude

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Overview

“The Plan for the Perfect Plot”

New Beginnings

In April, 2002, I was informed that I would be one of three people chosen to participate in The Muttart Foundation Fellowship Program for the upcoming year. The news came on my birthday and, needless to say, marked an exceptionally delightful gift!

Time to think and read, to restore, and to renew!

The Fellowship Program, created in 1996, is designed to provide a sabbatical year to senior people working in the voluntary sector. The two main purposes of the Fellowship Program are to provide the individual an opportunity for respite and renewal and to complete a research project on a topic of use to charities.

I began working in the voluntary sector in May, 1995, as executive director of the YWCA of Saskatoon. Prior to that from 1970 to 1994 I was a secondary school teacher, secondary school principal, and school district coordinator in Newfoundland and Labrador, my home province. During my career in education I had participated in a number of strategic planning initiatives. As school district coordinator for a school board in western Newfoundland, I had the opportunity to play an integral role in developing a district-wide mission statement and strategic plan. After that, I worked with specific schools to assist in the process of developing site-based school improvement plans with major emphasis on team-building, shared decision-making, improved the school culture, and wider involvement of home and school interactions.

One of the most memorable experiences of my education career was having the unparalleled opportunity to work for the Mushuau Innu people of (then called) Davis Inlet, Labrador. It was there, as school principal, I witnessed the tremendous challenges facing the Innu people as they began to take hold of the social issues and problems plaguing them. It was during that 1991-92 school year that a tragic house fire claimed the lives of six small Innu children. The Innu people, the elders, and the community as a whole decided to pursue a move from the island of Davis Inlet to an ancestral gathering place, Natuashish, 15 km on the Labrador mainland. The people collectively engaged in a critical reflection on the pressing issues of the community and together searched for solutions. More than a decade later, the results of this participatory process—one which engaged the whole community—is now bearing fruit. The people,

for the most part, have now relocated to Natuashish, a well-designed community site, one that will hopefully support their growing community in a healthy and sustainable manner.

Transforming the old, outmoded systems occurred because many, if not all, participated in the planning from the very beginning. The decision to move and to find the means to make it happen occurred at a community meeting held one wintry afternoon after the tragedy of the house fire. This was the catalyst which caused the people to take on the long and arduous tasks of building a new community for themselves and future generations. This process of change and community transformation has always intrigued me—offering a tantalizing vision that together we can cooperate and create for a better world.

When I began work in the mid-1990s at the YWCA of Saskatoon, I experienced the tremendous challenges facing agencies operating in the voluntary sector. During the mid-1990s, the public sector was experiencing deep cuts and the voluntary sector was even more vulnerable. Not only did major sources of government revenues dry up, but concomitantly huge increases in demands for essential services occurred.

Agencies like our YWCA began to be inundated with demands to provide a wider range of social services to more and more vulnerable and marginalized people. One example was our 40-room residence which had primarily been designed to serve the low-cost traveler, itinerant, or student. By then it was increasingly being used as a shelter for homeless women, many of whom experienced mental health problems, violence, and abuse. The YWCA residence had now become the largest shelter service provider in Saskatchewan.

By 1995-96 the YWCA Board of Directors, myself, and our staff recognized that the current reality was untenable. The ability of the YWCA to meet its mission and continue to be able to offer viable and sustainable programs had reached a critical juncture. We began a strategic planning process and identified two major key goals—to increase our partnerships in order to increase our ability to offer effective and sustainable programs, and to get our fiscal house in order. To achieve the goal of enhancing effective partnerships with other like-minded agencies, a community development approach was taken by the YWCA leadership in order to ascertain whether such alliances were of interest to other Saskatoon voluntary sector

agencies. This initial community development process extended over two years, as the YWCA conducted two studies in order to identify who would be interested in forging such effective partnerships. Both these studies were funded by The Muttart Foundation of Edmonton with additional financial support from Saskatoon's United Way and the Saskatoon Foundation. The considerable investment of staff and voluntary time from the six founding agencies all contributed to the successful implementation of our collective vision. And on May 4, 2000, volunteers with the YWCA and five partner agencies turned the sod to begin the construction of the Saskatoon Community Service Village. Within the next year, a 30,000-square-foot facility was completed; attached to and adjacent to the YWCA, 15 community-based agencies now form "The Village," a vibrant community centre.

The Saskatoon Community Service Village is a multi-layered endeavor with two distinct aspects. One is the collaborative process of thinking and acting in creative ways. It includes the building blocks of collaboration—lateral leadership, open dialogue, trust and shared goals. The second aspect is the realization of the practical and concrete results of the collaborative journey—project design, creation of a new charitable organization, fundraising and construction. The project will not only create a new organization and a new building, but new ways for the partner agencies to work together and to engage other organizations and community members. *(Clark, 2002, 2)*

Over the years I have been involved in many change initiatives in my career in education and most recently in my work in Saskatoon. The focus of my research project for the Fellowship program is to develop a toolkit of resources on strategic planning for the voluntary sector.

Having worked in this sector now for almost a decade, I am acutely aware of how under-resourced and stressed many agencies are, in terms of human and financial capacity. In my experience, the voluntary sector is expected to provide more and more critical human services to fill the growing demands in our communities while responding to the tremendous pressures to act more like business. This is in no way meant to suggest that voluntary sector organizations should not be governed, led, and operated in the best way possible; demonstrating good business practice and stewardship

of all the resources at its disposal, but simply to note the pressures on the voluntary sector, how it is changing, and the need to find suitable methods of planning that will support the needed changes.

Having the time to research and read widely is often difficult to do in the daily hectic pace of most charities. Thus the purpose of this toolkit is that it be a workbook of resources and an overview on four methodologies of strategic planning. By including a brief compilation of current methods, I hope to offer boards of directors and staff with a capsulated view of recent literature on these planning methodologies. The bibliography will also include additional resources on planning.

I also wanted to search out ideas and practical processes that incorporate ethical and guiding principles into all planning and highlight this work as the foundation stone for effective decision-making in future planning.

Planning

In a lyrical creation story, the writer describes the origins of the universe. The creator forms the universe and all living things in six days and rests on the seventh, admiring the handiwork as wondrous and good. The divine imagination brought into materiality a vibrant, complex, interdependent, sustaining living system. Some have described this as the universe's great master plan wherein all life emerged.

Planning on a more finite scale is a natural and familiar activity in which we humans continually engage! Whether it be formal or informal, personal or public, human imagination has a wondrous capacity to plan, create, innovate, and change. Imagining some preferred outcome; a wonderful family reunion, a local community effort in order to build a recreational centre, planning a wedding, graduation, or anniversary all require the execution of a plan. For some, the planning process can be a logical, step-by-step engagement; for others, planning can look like a hectic, last minute, chaotic flurry.

Whatever the human attributes that are brought in to the planning process, it normally encompasses a beginning or recognizable starting phase and results in an outcome or end point—preferably the desired one of the participants! A caveat, though to keep in mind, comes from the pen of the great Scottish poet.

To A Mouse

On Turning up her Nest With The Plough, November 1785
Robert Burns (1759 – 1796)

But, Mousie, thou art no they lane (not alone)
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley, (amiss)
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain
For promis'd joy.

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
Thy present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!

Robert Burns' poetic imagery captures nicely the complexity and idiosyncratic aspects of life. No matter how carefully we plan, we still can be startled and surprised by what tomorrow brings. For boards of directors, strategic thinking and strategic planning are critical components of their governance function.

Boards of directors and senior staff in voluntary sector agencies always have to struggle to find time and energy to pay attention to the myriad of matters that face them on a daily basis. In order to effectively enter into a strategic planning process, certain pre-conditions need to be considered that may help to save time in the long run and help to prepare for the unexpected.

In Chapter 2, I will discuss the challenges facing our global communities today and reflect on how we, as individuals and communities, can work together to achieve a common good for all and contribute to creating a civil society—locally and globally.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss some current ideas about organizational theory and present some fresh thinking from the literature on this topic. Fitjof Capra and other leading thinkers today are writing about the changes that are needed in our 21st century organizations and the human interactions occurring within them. In the 1970s and 1980s, the convergence of scientific thinking about nonlinear phenomena

began to emerge more fully, due in part to the support of technological advances and more powerful computers. New and intriguing theories about the key characteristics of life were being developed. Capra, in his 2002 work, *The Hidden Connections* promotes the seminal idea that "theoretical ideas of science can be applied to the practical everyday concerns of our time including management of human organizations, the challenges and dangers of economic globalization and the nature and problems of biotechnology." "The new scientific understanding of life, based on the concepts of nonlinear dynamics, represents a conceptual watershed." *(Capra, 2002, XVIII)*

Capra's work over the past quarter century clearly demonstrates the progression of his wide-ranging ideas, culminating in *The Hidden Connection*—his most recent work. The evolution of his thought to encompass "the integrating of biological, cognitive, and social dimensions of life in order to understand and shape organizational cultures and global networks into ethical and truly democratic institutions marked by the principles of sustainability and social inclusion represents dramatic paradigm change. Capra and the other writers that I have drawn on extensively in this project ably demonstrate the characteristics of genuine and human leadership so necessary for this 21st century. As leading-edge thinkers, they offer us enticing and visionary ideas that are not static and can nourish and inform our own ideas and planning.

In the descriptions of the four methodologies found in Chapter 5, most, if not all, the authors reiterate the significance and importance of individuals and groups who are engaged in planning to be self-directed and self-determined in their planning approaches. The more widely participative the planning methods, the more adaptation, flexibility, innovation, and use of local expertise and wisdom is encouraged. In contrast to the deductive, linear, and prescribed thinking of planning methods of earlier years, the current crop of writers and thinkers are drawing on more holistic and encompassing ideas. Their works are advancing positive change initiatives for ourselves and our institutions and as a direct consequence—our global village. When the first astronauts traveled to outer space and looked back at the earth, all humanity saw this small blue and green jewel through their eyes and many experienced a profound moral, spiritual, and intellectual shift in perspective. National boundaries disappeared and a vision of an integrative reality was presented to

us. Our collective actions, our present and future decisions, and indeed, global sustainability lay before us. The earth has became our collective Garden Patch—how we integrate these new learnings into our daily lives will mark our stewardship of our communities and social institutions.

Now armed with effective language and fresh ideas, we are more able to understand and describe complex systems. New insights led to fresh questions thus exposing the possibility of opening up avenues of thought and actions, especially in our social institutions and human interactions.

In the future,…the key challenge of this new century—for social scientists, natural scientists, and everyone else—will be to build ecologically sustainable communities, designed in such a way that their technologies and social institutions—their material and social structures—to not interfere with nature's inherent ability to sustain life. *(Capra, 2002, XIX)*

All planning attempts to circumscribe the future. Even the language of strategic planning methodology points to this reality…*i.e.*, the Search Conference, Scenario Planning, Appreciative Inquiry, the Strategy Change Cycle. What Capra and other theorists on organizational change are challenging us to do is to rethink how we view our organizations and social institutions. Viewing them "as living systems (*i.e.*, in terms of complex nonlinear networks)" will help us to think more creatively, plan in a more sustainable fashion, and generate new insights about the complex nature of the environments in which we and our organizations operate. In a very real sense, like many other traditional institutions, management of human organizations is also changing. New models of management theory and organizational design, suited to this 21st century, are emerging. Fresh ideas about planning and change models are, as a consequence, being developed. By reviewing ideas from these writers, I hope to provide some background for the reader, help to determine the choice of the most appropriate method of strategic planning for organizations and provide inspiration to add the reader's own ideas to the process. Chapter 3 will also cover the governance roles and responsibilities of the volunteer board of directors with respect to strategic planning and leadership, a critical and essential aspect for boards to discuss. Crucial leadership questions need to be asked. Will outside experts be hired to lead the process? Or will the board determine that the organization has all the necessary resources

within to accomplish its goals? What are the responsibilities that the designated leadership needs to attend to even if the planning process will be as widely participatory, democratic, and inclusive as possible? What leadership characteristics should be present or should be encouraged to emerge?

In Chapter 4, I will discuss essential elements that boards of directors and senior leadership should consider as part of their leadership and governance roles. Developing values statements, guiding principles, and ethical foundations on which to build the vision and mission of the organization is critical and central work. It is the responsibility of the board of directors and designated leadership to engage in this process prior to starting the strategic planning process. An informed and empowered board of directors can be strategically focused and exercise their leadership and governance if values, ethics, and guiding principles are named and made operational. Ethical governance is a hot topic these days. The Voluntary Sector can provide leadership and direction for citizens and other institutions and business in the area of ethical governance. A survey completed in 2000 by the Canadian Centre of Philanthropy concluded (that) "Canadians had a high level of public trust and a sense that the charitable or voluntary sector is becoming more important. Nearly 80 per cent of those polled believe that charities are trustworthy and understand the needs of the average Canadian better than government." *(Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2000, 4)* Ensuring that the Voluntary Sector retains this high approval and trust of Canadians is critical to the very essence of this sector and part of renewing the social contract with Canadians.

Chapter 5 will provide an overview of some current methodologies of strategic planning and is offered to boards of directors and senior staff to help them consider and choose the best planning process for their respective organization. For each methodology a brief commentary on the strengths and challenges from my point of view will be presented. Additional resources for the particular methodology will be included in the bibliography as the information contained in this workbook should be considered as an overview for each method. The four methodologies presented are:

- The Strategy Change Cycle
- Scenario Planning

- The Search Conference
- Appreciative Inquiry Summit.

Finally, I will outline briefly some essential elements of actual major change initiatives. The Health Care Corporation of St. John's, Newfoundland and the YWCA of Saskatoon and the Saskatoon Community Service Village are examples of "real life" strategic planning. Both involved diverse groups and major changes and though there are some similarities, the Health Care Corporation involved almost 7,000 employees while the Saskatoon story is appreciably smaller, nonetheless, there are useful learnings to be gleaned from both, and they are offered here for this purpose. The example from the Health Care Corporation involves its innovative application of ethics and guiding principles as a foundation for all major change, and the Saskatoon story relates the use of reflective practice as a tool to promote strategic thinking and discussion, build trust and alliances, and effect real substantive change.

Chapter 6 includes the bibliography which contains additional resources. When beginning this research project, I was interested in reviewing and revisiting the concept of strategic planning to search out newer methodologies. One of the realities I became acutely aware of is the plethora of material that exists on the topic of strategic planning. How to sift through reams of material looked to be a daunting task. During this research process, a number of useful step-by-step workbooks came to my attention. They are noted in the bibliography and are excellent resources on strategic planning.

It is common to hear that people in organizations resist change. In reality, people do not resist change; they resist having change imposed upon them. Being alive, individuals and their communities are both stable and subject to change and development, but their natural change processes are very different from the organizational changes designed by "re-engineering" experts and mandated from the top." *(Capra, 2002, 100)*

Chapter 2

Chapter 2

Creating A Civil Society

"We've Got to Get Back to the Garden" (Joni Mitchell, Woodstock)

- Holding the Public Trust
- Renewing the Social Contract
- Values-Based Sector
- Ethical Codes of Practice

Creating A Civil Society

> Rarely perhaps has any generation shown so little interest as ours does in any kind of theoretical or systematic ethics. The academic question of a system of ethics seems to be of all questions the most superfluous. The reason for this is not to be sought in any supposed ethical indifference on the part of our period. On the contrary, it arises from the fact that our period, more than any earlier period in the history of the west, is oppressed by a superabounding reality of concrete ethical problems. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics as Formation (Dellla Costa, 1998, 34)*

Bonhoeffer's words written well over a half century ago seem even more prescient today in the winter of 2003. Wars, poverty, global illnesses, and terrorism seem to be mounting and intractable problems facing our global community. Technological mastery of the war machine, the like never seen before, is raining destruction on an ancient land and its people. Joseph Runzo, author of *War and the Destruction of the Soul*, speaking at the 2003 Congress on the Humanities and Social Sciences in Halifax noted that there are currently 300,000 child soldiers fighting in various civil and inter-country wars. Many of these children are as young as 10 years old when they are considered strong enough to hold an armed weapon. "Decommissioning" these children, brutalized by years of war, and promoting their social inclusion into normal community living would seem an intractable reality.

Stephen Lewis, Canada's former ambassador to the United Nations spoke recently to a Canadian parliamentary committee. He told them that with millions of Africans being orphaned and killed by AIDS, Canada must do more to break the moral insensitivity of the West.

"It is astonishing that people are talking about 100 million deaths and there is not a pronounced western voice," said Lewis. Another generation from now will condemn us for our blindness and inaction. The juxtaposition of the current war occurring in Iraq with the AIDS pandemic raging in Africa is almost too much for the mind and heart to bear.

How do we, as ordinary and generally speaking good intentioned people, going about our daily round deal with these global realities? The answers and solutions are complex but if we fail, at our local levels to redress injustice, violence, and social ills, we will fail at the

global level as well. To think globally and act locally is a powerful message for protecting the common good and working to address social injustice.

In a recent presentation in Saskatoon, Nettie Wiebe, former president of the Canadian Farmers Union and social activist commented that to effect change, people must be willing to work together for the common good. This is where change starts to happen. Alone we are overwhelmed, together we can make a start at a new beginning. At the local and international levels, it is the NGO (non-governmental organizations) sector which are often the first responders. In areas at war, in the AIDS hospices, people are working together for the common good.

Holding the Public Trust

The voluntary sector in Canada is a large and vibrant source of citizen participation. It is estimated that 180,000 nonprofit organizations of which 80,000 are registered charities operate in Canada. According to the 2000 statistics, 6.5 million people volunteered their time and over 1.3 million people are employed in the sector.

> The Voluntary Sector consists of organizations that exist to serve a public benefit, are self-governing, do not distribute any profits to members, and depend to a meaningful degree on volunteers. Membership or involvement in these organizations is not compulsory, and they are independent of, and institutionally distinct from, the formal structures of government and the private sector. Although many voluntary sector organizations rely on paid staff to carry out their work, all depend on volunteers at least on their Boards of Directors. (VSI Website)

In a November 6, 2000 speech in Delhi to participants in the McGill-McConnell program for voluntary sector, leaders, and guests from the Indian voluntary sector, Tim Brodhead, executive director of the McConnell Foundation, provided the following brief historical snapshot of the Canadian social contract.

Brodhead notes that for about 25 years from the 1960s an “implicit” social contract with Canadians was intact.

- The private sector role was to create wealth.
- Government set the rules and minimum standards for citizens.
- The voluntary sector met special needs and provided a sense of inclusion.

Throughout the late 1960s and into the 1970s, citizens were encouraged to participate actively in Pierre Elliott Trudeau's vision of a "Just Society." Tremendous social change and ferment in activism was growing. Through government and voluntary sector collaboration, many public programs, especially related to children and families, were being delivered through registered charities.

"By the late '90s over 40 per cent of charities' revenue was coming from government contracts," said Brodhead, "and a much higher proportion than that for charities engaged in social welfare, education, and health. Indeed some were asking in what way programs provided by a not-for-profit differed from those provided directly by the public sector?"

Throughout the late 1990s, huge declines in government funding occurred at the federal and provincial levels. The consequences of this major upheaval are still impacting the voluntary sector today. Social and human service agencies, especially food banks and shelters, saw a sharp spiking in numbers of people, from individuals to whole families seeking their essential daily needs of food and shelter.

These facts are well-documented by those working in the sector. For the purpose of this paper it is noteworthy to reflect on how these forces and trends have directly influenced and changed the voluntary sector. "This crisis began as a financial squeeze but rapidly turned into an existential crisis as voluntary agencies were forced to confront questions of their role, viability, and even legitimacy." *(Brodhead, 2000, 1)*

Renewing the Social Contract

Out of this crisis of identity, a number of positive trends are occurring. If, as Brodhead, contends, the social contract in the 1960s was more implicit, now in the 21st century, we are seeing more organizations clearly articulating a renewed and explicit social contract.

In 1995, 12 national umbrella organizations came together to form the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR) to strengthen the sector's capacity and to renew an appropriate relationship between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada.

From the initial roundtable consultations under the chair of the Hon. Ed Broadbent, a series of joint tables was struck to further study issues and to make recommendations on capacity, legislation, and regulatory matters. Detailed information on the progress and work of these Joint Tables can be found on the CCP or VSI websites (see resource list).

On December 5, 2001, Prime Minister Jean Chretien signed into agreement an accord between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector. As well, the government appointed the first cabinet minister to be responsible to and for the voluntary sector.

The Accord represents the first steps in a renewed social contract and provides a greater voice for and visibility of this diverse sector. Formalizing the relationship between the voluntary sector and government ensures further development in strengthening the sector capacity. From this strengthened platform social purpose can be strengthened.

This is a timely and ultimately strategic relationship. As boards of directors and senior leadership engage in their own organizational strategic planning, the backdrop and significance of this Accord and the work of the joint tables is pertinent and critical information.

Part of any strategic planning methodology requires that the "planning team" prepare and collect significant background documents and resources to inform and illuminate the planning process. In the Accord's background documents, the factors that lead to the development of this agreement are listed. These factors articulate the role of the voluntary sector in a civil society and help to focus and shape future strategic directions for the sector as a whole.

A number of factors have led to the development of this Accord:

- At the end of the millennium, globalization, increasingly diverse populations, new economic and social realities, and changing government roles resulted in increased pressure on the voluntary sector which in turn led the sector and the Government of Canada to search for better ways of working together and with others.

- The last decade also saw a greatly increased awareness of the voluntary sector and the contribution it makes to all civil society in giving voice to citizens, identifying important and emerging issues, shaping policies, and providing important services. The concept of the "voluntary sector as a sector" has been growing in the public consciousness and in the sector.

- Both the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada are large and diverse. It is important for each to know what to expect and to appreciate the roles, goals, and perspectives of the other.

- A number of provinces and other countries have seen benefits from setting out in writing the vision and expectations of the relationship between their governments and the voluntary sector. For example, in 1998, the development of Compacts between governments and the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom attracted worldwide interest.

Values-Based Sector

An historical review of the origins of most voluntary sector/public sector institutions like health, education, care of the disadvantaged, advocacy for justice, and human rights demonstrates that most, if not all, emerged from religious social activism. Within various religious traditions, schools, hospitals, services to the imprisoned, the poor, and destitute were integral to people's faith and social conscience. To be an adherent to a faith—one was expected to be involved in communal good works.

The original founding visions of many socially conscious institutions like the YWCA and YMCA often reflected these deeply held principles, values, and ethical perspectives.

The Accord of 2001 between the Voluntary Sector and the Government of Canada is based on values and principles that have been long held in Canadian society as significant in contributing to a civil society strongly committed to the common good.

Values

Democracy

Upholding the right to associate freely, to express freely, and to engage in advocacy.

Active Citizenship

Welcoming the active involvement or engagement of individuals and communities in shaping society, whether through political or voluntary activity or both.

Equality

Respecting the rights of Canadians under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, and the rights of individuals worldwide as defined by the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Diversity

Respecting the rich variety of cultures, languages, identities, views, abilities, and communities in Canada.

Inclusion

Welcoming the expression and representation of diversity and upholding the right of each to speak and to be heard.

Social Justice

Ensuring the full participation in the social, economic and political life of communities.

Principles

The Accord is based on the following four guiding principles:

Principle 1: Independence

The Government of Canada and the voluntary sector are autonomous, have unique strengths and accountabilities, and agree that:

- The Government of Canada is accountable to all Canadians for its actions and has a responsibility to identify issues of national concern and mobilize resources to address them, establish policies, and make decisions in the best interest of all Canadians.
- Voluntary sector organizations are accountable to their supporters and to those they serve in providing services, organizing activities, and giving collective voice at the local, national, and international level.
- The independence of voluntary sector organizations includes their right within the law to challenge public policies, programs, and legislation and to advocate for change.
- Advocacy is inherent to debate and change in a democratic society and, subject to the above principles, it should not affect any funding relationship that might exist.

Principle 2: Interdependence

The voluntary sector and the Government of Canada recognize that:

- The actions of one can directly or indirectly affect the other, since both often share the same object of common good, operate in the same areas of Canadian life, and serve the same clients.
- Each has complex and important relationships with others (business, labour, provincial, territorial and local governments, *etc.*) and the Accord is not meant to affect these other relationships.

Principle 3: Dialogue

The voluntary sector and the Government of Canada, recognizing that sharing of ideas, perspectives, and experiences contributes to better understanding, improved identification of priorities, and sound public policy, agree that:

- Dialogue should be open, respectful, informed, sustained, and welcome a range of viewpoints.
- Dialogue should be carried out in a way which represents each party's confidential information, and builds and maintains trust.
- Appropriately designed processes and governance structures are necessary to achieve sustained dialogue.

Principle 4: Cooperation and Collaboration

The Government of Canada and the voluntary sector agree that the social fabric of communities is strengthened and civic engagement is increased when they work together to address issues of mutual concern, and that:

- Working together to identify common priorities or complementary objectives will help facilitate cooperation and collaboration.
- Working relationships should be flexible and respect what others contribute and the challenges and constraints under which they operate.

In addition to their separate accountabilities, the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada are accountable for maintaining the trust and confidence of Canadians by:

- Ensuring transparency, high standards of conduct, and sound management in their work together; and
- Monitoring and reporting on the results.

The roles and responsibilities between the voluntary sector and Government of Canada are included here to demonstrate the values and principles on which the sector bases its reason for being.

This Accord represents the first steps in a process of building and strengthening the capacity of the voluntary sector, at both the local and national levels.

Ethical Codes of Practice

One of the most significant and strategic elements to come from the Accord and the Joint Tables process is the development of codes of ethical practice. These codes will guide and inform interactions between voluntary sector organizations and government, while demonstrating to donors, volunteers, and the community, the transparent ethical foundation on which voluntary sector organizations base their operations. The trust that Canadians have placed in the voluntary sector and its unique historical focus on values and serving the common good place the voluntary sector in a pivotal place in society. Social organizations, based on values and social responsibility which inspire people to voluntarily join together to act locally and think globally, have tremendous power for positive change. The voluntary sector matters because people are able "to express their values through action not motivated by personal gain or coercion but by conviction. Social capital is built up and the primary focus is on solving social problems. Lastly a healthy voluntary sector nurtures cultural and social diversity." *(Brodhead, 2000, 5)*

The economist, John Maynard Keynes wrote in 1931 "that our modern economic practice is based on moral inversion…of the pseudo-moral principles that have hag-ridden us for 200 years, by which we have exalted some of the most distasteful of human qualities into the positions of highest virtue." "Competitiveness" is celebrated, though it is often a cloak for single-minded aggressiveness. Egocentric lust for power is elevated to "strategic mastery" and "leadership" in the business world and "exponential greed" is lauded as "wealth creation." *(Della Costa, 1998, 37)*

Genuine human virtues in leadership and a global ethic for a global village need to be activated to counteract the enormous impact of globalization. Certain aspects of the transnational and corporate sectors have dominated societal progression. The negative cost to the human community and the global environment is immense. Many theorists are making strong and compelling cases for the growing significance of reflecting core human virtues and ethics in the

public, private, and voluntary sectors. An ethical orientation in business is relevant to good business and organizational practice. Perhaps the practices of the voluntary sector will migrate to the private sector.

This is not to deify the role of the voluntary sector but to grasp that its central focus is that ordinary people can voluntarily come together without hope of monetary or personal gain to achieve a common social good.

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world." *(Eleanor Roosevelt, http://www.udhr.org/index.htm)*

Eleanor Roosevelt, First Lady to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, humanitarian and chairperson of the *Declaration of Human Rights*, believed this declaration to be her greatest legacy. In reflecting on her work and the place of human rights, her words still echo true today.

On the 50th anniversary of the *Declaration of Human Rights* speech, in December 7, 1998 in Paris, Mary Robinson, high commissioner on human rights, gave a speech entitled "On the Eve of the Twenty-First Century." Robinson said that as we approach the new millennium it is important to ask how we have lived up to the vision of those who framed the *Declaration*, how we can do more on behalf of those who rights are not yet vindicated and how we can meet the challenges of the future.

In the course of her speech, Robinson articulated the daunting list of failures towards achieving the reality of universal human rights around the world. She puts forth a challenge that we can and must do better. "It is not sufficient to be appalled by human rights violations and to denounce them. We must devise new, improved strategies to tackle and prevent abuses. The stakes are high—the credibility of our institutions of governance is at issue. We have to

demonstrate that tolerance is better than intolerance, diversity and pluralism better than racism and sexual discrimination, power-sharing better than authoritarianism, peace better than conflict. The suffering of the disadvantaged and those denied their human rights must be a constant warning against complacency." She enumerates the profound changes and challenges facing our global community; beliefs and values are everywhere challenged; revolutionary techniques such as the Genome project, cloning, genetically modified organisms, environmental depletion are "momentous changes." Power is shifting from the state, and nations are not as powerful as they were when the original universal declaration was written. Robinson, in her address, calls for fresh ideas and strategies in order to address "traditional human rights and the new, far-reaching challenges that are emerging. My vision is of a new partnership between key actors in the human rights field."

She notes these as the United Nations, states and regional groups, transnational corporations, multilateral bodies (IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organizations), and non-governmental organizations. Here she notes, "as the state's role weakens, the importance of non-governmental organizations increases." The role of the NGO is well summed up by Aung San Suu Kyi: "The watchfulness and active cooperation of organizations outside the spheres of officialdom are necessary to ensure the four essential components of the human rights paradigm as identified by the United Nations Development Programme: productivity, equity, sustainability, and empowerment…development must be by people not only for them. People must participate fully in the decisions and processes that shape their lives."

In conclusion, Robinson states "at a time of moral and ethical confusion, (that) we are members of one human family with rights in common and duties towards each other." Eleanor Roosevelt's words bring into relief the importance for each individual to have their own human rights active and alive in their own homes and places of work and in their daily round. What happens at the local level extrapolates to the global community. Mary Robinson speaking 50 years later, reiterates this same theme with an added emphasis that…"not only does each and every individual have universal human rights (in theory) we also need to emphasize that each and every individual has duties and responsibilities to the community as well."

"Tes droits sont mes devoirs, tes devoirs sont mes droits." *Rene Cassin*

Chapter 3

Chapter 3

Organizations as Living Systems

“The Garden Fence”

- Organizational Language and Theory
- Trends and Forces
- Role of Volunteer Board Governance and Leadership in Strategic Planning
- Positive Leadership Trends

Organizational Language and Theory

Organization as Metaphor

Many factors can influence how boards of directors, individuals, and senior staff choose to enter into a planning process. Often one's understanding of organizational management and the perspective from which one views organizational theory can determine the most suitable planning process and identify the best approaches or strategies to use in planning.

Again, I want to draw on Fritjof Capra's work in order to help us think about how we organize ourselves in our social institutions. By understanding, through metaphors, how most organizations operate through their governance and operational structures, we may be better able to identify appropriate planning methodologies best suited to the local circumstance and the people who will be involved.

In *The Hidden Connections*, Capra discusses the use of metaphorical language in management theory. In the chapter "Life and Leadership in Organizations," he draws on various well-known theorists of management to provide definitions that can help frame one's perspective. First though, he suggests that the underlying constant in both the theory and practice of management is "that of steering an organization in a direction consistent with its goals and purposes. And management theorist Peter Block points out the chief concerns of management are the definition of purpose, the use of power and the distribution of wealth. *(Capra, 2002, 101)* Capra draws on Gareth Morgan's work, which illustrates succinctly how metaphorical language is incorporated. Depending upon the metaphor one subscribes to, this can help to influence the choice of planning method.

The medium of organization and management is metaphor. Management theory and practice is shaped by a metaphorical process that influences virtually everything we do.

Key Metaphors:

- Organizations as machines (with a focus on control and efficiency)
- Organizations as organisms (development and adaptation)
- Organizations as brains (organizational learning)
- Organizations as cultures (values, beliefs)
- Organizations as systems of government (conflicts of interest, power)

Capra goes on to distinguish further between the metaphors. “From the point of view of our conceptual framework we see that the organism and brain metaphors address the biological and cognitive dimensions of life respectively while the culture and government metaphors represent various aspects of the social dimensions. The main contrast is between the metaphor of organizations as machines and that of organizations as living systems.” *(Capra, 2002, 102)*

Depending upon your respective circumstances and the needs of the group or organization these metaphorical illustrations can serve to inform prospective planners, boards and senior staff, of the choice of models and frameworks of planning best suited to their respective organizations.

The techniques and terminology of strategic planning have been used in business for the past 30 to 40 years. Primarily associated with use in military and industrial settings, some of the more mechanistic models have migrated into the public sector and voluntary sectors. Theorists and practitioners alike have been divided about the success of strategic planning. If, after expensive and time-consuming efforts, the question remains, has strategic planning truly provided the hoped for benefit? “The past 35 years strategic planning has become a standard part of management thinking and practice in the business world. Only in the past 10 to 15 years has strategic planning become standard practice of public and non-profit organizations.” *(Bryson, 1995, X)*

While the term strategic planning is commonly used and understood in the literature and in organizational practice, I think that it is useful to keep in mind the origins and purposes of original strategic planning techniques. Because they were drawn to serve a primarily military and business audience, their components tend to be more mechanistic and governmental.

I will continue to utilize the word strategic throughout this workbook in discussions about planning; however, I believe that other models of planning that draw on development, adaptation, organizational learning, values, and beliefs are just as strategic. The metaphorical processes that influence what we do can be helpful if we stand back and reflect upon them in the first place. In the current literature on planning many authors like Peter Senge would describe this as the act of engaging in strategic thinking which should precede any successful planning.

Thinking Differently

While there has been a growing pressure by voluntary sector agencies to adopt the practices and language of the private sector, there also has been a parallel awareness of the voluntary sector's importance and its unique differences. It is seen by many Canadians as trustworthy and considered to have a vital role in the social and civic life of communities different from the private sector. A variety of methodologies of planning that can be adapted to fit the wide range and diversity of voluntary sector organizations would seem a sensible direction to consider.

In an erudite and compelling presentation at the September 2002 Muttart Foundation lecture, Janice Stein dealt with the dilemma in which the voluntary sector has been caught since adopting the language of management practices and business without reflecting on the consequences. She states: In the relentless drive for increased productivity in the public and voluntary sectors, a drive that is often fuelled by the need to secure private funding and to build public-private partnerships, these two sectors have adopted, at times unwillingly, a rhetoric and a language of productivity that is considerably narrower that that of the private sector. I argue that the language of efficiency or productivity, taken to extremes in the public and voluntary sectors can compromise social trust, our sense of social responsibility, our capacity to produce new knowledge and

innovate, and even our capacity to prosper. Within this larger language of efficiency, or cost-effectiveness, I want to examine three specific challenges to the delivery of public services where the public and voluntary sectors suffer particularly badly from the unreflective translation of private sector language. *(Janice Stein, Muttart Foundation Public Lecture, September 2002)*

The three challenges Stein examines are: redundancy, research and innovation, and accountability. She contends that failure to build redundancy in the delivery of essential public services can have grave consequences. Failure to commit resources to research and innovation will atrophy the voluntary sector. Finally, she discusses the conundrum of measuring accountability in the voluntary sector as compared to the "easily available corrective feedback that markets generally provide to producers of private goods." *(Stein lecture)*

Thus, Stein suggests, the public and voluntary sector require just as much of a resource base that the business and private sector routinely build into their business practice in order to operate effectively and to accomplish their business purposes.

When I was working in the education field, we would half jokingly comment that if the corporate and business sector held as many bake sales, flea markets, and school dance-a-thons as we did to make ends meet at our school, it would be a refreshing change of pace!

As the following authors from the Voluntary Sector Leadership Program suggest, the voluntary sector seems to be saddled with a culture of trying to do more and more with less and less resources. Without adequate program delivery capacity, personnel growth capacity and adaptive capacity to research and innovate the voluntary sector and the public sector will fail to accomplish their social purpose in an effective and meaningful manner.

A July, 2002 e-newsletter from the Non-Profit Leadership Programs at Dalhousie deals with similar themes and is worth consideration by boards and senior staff as a pre-condition to planning. The article titled "Organizational Effectiveness and Leadership in the Voluntary Sector" discusses current thinking and trends for the voluntary sector in the 21st century. The article argues that in order to provide "great community-oriented programs, they require strong organizational foundations and effective leadership." However, the author points out that the voluntary sector has long supported the

view to funders and the community that one measure of effectiveness is the high percentage of resources committed to "program delivery" relative to "administration." This is similar to the arguments made by Stein in *The Cult of Efficiency* and, as the newsletter author suggests, this may not be a useful dichotomy.

Greater social impact should not be equated with expanding programs but with organizational performance and innovation.

Letts, Ryan and Grossman in *High Performance Non-Profit Organizations Managing Upstream for Greater Impact* write:

> The nonprofit sector appears highly ambivalent about strengthening its organizations. On one hand we can agree that we need to take care of organizations that are tackling difficult problems. On the other hand, deeply ingrained behaviors, public policy, funding systems and the culture of nonprofit service itself have all led the sector to rely on virtually anything but organizational capacity as a foundation for lasting effectiveness.

These three authors, all with the Hauser Centre for Non-Profit Organizations at Harvard University, argue that the voluntary sector needs to address an organizational performance agenda, focused more on adaptive capacity not "to aim at prescribing new tools and practices for nonprofit managers, but at challenging all stakeholders in the sector *to think differently about organizational capacity.*" *(E. Grant MacDonald, 2002, 1)*

The following three aspects of organizational performance require certain elements of core organizational competency and they highlight the point that in order for the voluntary sector to grow innovation, adaptation and creativity must flourish in these areas.

I. Program Delivery Capacity

- Program knowledge of social problems and solutions
- Client knowledge
- Project management
- Budgeting
- Research and communications

II. Program Growth Capacity

- Personnel management and human resources
- Financial controls
- Asset and resource building
- Ongoing training and development for employees and volunteers

III. Adaptive Capacity: Key Organizational Abilities and Strengths

- Community knowledge (mission and community needs)
- Innovativeness (research and innovation)
- Responsiveness (modifying, adapting, responding programs —flexibility)
- Motivation (recruitment of fresh talent and training and improving the skills of current employees)
- Learning (all aspects of learning organizational theory)
- Quality (standards and reputation)
- Collaboration (ability to innovate, cooperate, build on community strengths, and growth)

Fritjof Capra's engaging argument in *The Hidden Connections*, also guides us to consider fresh thinking about organizational theory and to ponder some of the impacts of traditional management theory and their effect upon voluntary institutions. He begins his query into organizations with a commentary on the observations he has been making over the past 10 years. Over this time he has been invited to speak at numerous business conferences and has been fascinated by how much focus has been applied to the concept of organizational change. The observant scientist that he is, Capra noted the dichotomy between the prescribed business agenda consistently demanding change, with the different picture he saw in the top executives.

> Top executives are under enormous stress today. They work longer hours than ever before, and many complain that they have no time for personal relationships and experience little satisfaction in their lives…companies look powerful from the outside, but they themselves feel pushed around by global market forces and insecure in the face of turbulence they can never predict nor comprehend…there is a deep and pervasive feeling among managers that, no matter how hard they work, things are out of control.
>
> The root cause of this deep malaise among business executives seems to be the enormous complexity that has become one of the foremost characteristics of present-day industrial society. *(Capra, 2002, 98)*

Capra's observations of the impacts of the mechanistic world view that has so dominated and informed management theory and application for the past couple of hundred years are worth consideration. His comments help to further illuminate some of the negative impacts on the public and voluntary sectors. Management theory was an integral part of the much broader mechanistic paradigm formulated by Descartes and Newton in the seventeenth century and has dominated our culture for several hundred years, during which it has shaped modern Western society and has significantly influenced the rest of the world. *(Capra, 2002, 102-03)*

The mechanistic and scientific management theories developed by Max Weber and Fredrich Taylor, among others, are well-documented in the literature of organizational management. It is widely recognized that these principles and practice of scientific management are operating in the assembly line and fast food outlet chains. One could also argue that the corporate traditional methodology of strategic planning comes directly out of this line of thinking and theory. Much of this thinking intends to exert control over all parts of the organization and achieves maximum productivity often from a top-down hierarchical approach. This has had an enduring legacy on our collective thinking about organizational culture. But some hard questions need to be asked….

> Why (aren't) our organizations working so well? Many of us are troubled by questions that haunt our work. Why do many organizations feel lifeless? Why do projects take so long, develop ever greater complexity, yet too often fail to achieve any truly significant results? Why does progress, when it appears, so often

> come from unexpected places, or as a result of surprises or synchronistic events that our planning had not considered? Why does change itself, that event we're all supposed to be "managing" keep drowning us, relentlessly making us feel less capable and more confused? And why have our expectations for success diminished to the point that often the best we hope for is endurance and patience to survive the frequent disruptive forces in our organizations and lives? *(Wheatley, 1999, 3)*

Searching for New Questions

Capra, Wheatley, and Stein, among others, are exploring fresh and new paradigms of thinking about our social and organizational institutions. In an age dominated by global multi-nationals and massive military industrial complexes, how do we illuminate our minds and inspire creativity and innovation to chart a renewed course for the voluntary sector? When we are in impasse, it is always useful to view the problem from another perspective. Einstein's exhortation that: "no problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it," rings with veracity and wisdom. *(Wheatley, 1999, 7)*

To illustrate how we need to have a fresh look at the driving forces affecting the voluntary sector, the following parable may point a way. It is a story about Neils Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, two founders of quantum theory. Wheatley often uses this parable in her extensive consulting work with business and organizations. As often as she tells this story a collective recognition among her audiences occurs—the light bulb goes on and people react with a recognition that if "nothing changes—nothing changes!"

> In the twentieth century, physicists faced, for the first time, a serious challenge to their ability to understand the universe. Every time they asked nature a question in an atomic experiment, nature answered with a paradox, and the more they tried to clarify the situation, the sharper the paradoxes became. In their struggle to grasp this new reality, scientists became painfully aware that their basic concepts, their language, and their whole way of thinking were inadequate to describe atomic phenomena.
>
> Their problem was not only intellectual but involved an intense emotional and existential experience, as vividly described by Werner Heisenberg: "I remember discussions with Bohr which went through many hours till very late at night and ended almost

> in despair; and when at the end of the discussion I went alone for a walk in the neighboring park I repeated to myself again and again the question: can nature possibly be so absurd as it seemed to us in these atomic experiments?"
>
> It took these physicists a long time to accept the fact that the paradoxes they encountered are an essential aspect of atomic physics…once this was perceived, the physicists began to learn to ask the right questions and to avoid contradictions…and finally they found the precise and consistent mathematical formulation of (quantum) theory.
>
> Even after the mathematical formulation of quantum theory was completed, its conceptual framework was by no means easy to accept. Its effect on the physicists' view of reality was truly shattering. The new physics necessitated profound changes in concepts of space, time, matter, object, and cause and effect; and because these concepts are so fundamental to our way of experiencing the world, their transformation came as a great shock. To quote Heisenberg again: "The violent reaction to the recent development of modern physics can only be understood when one realizes that here the foundations of physics have started moving; and that this motion has caused the feeling that the ground would be cut from science. *(Capra, The Turning Point, 1983)*

To engage in a period of public discussion about the purpose, roles and capacity-building of the voluntary sector and to reflect on the language we use to discuss its essential elements such as governance and leadership, vision, and values are important realities to consider. To probe deeply into future trends for the sector will be important for all who are involved in and concerned about its viability and efficacy. In *The Cult of Efficiency,* Janice Stein opens her book with two illuminating quotes. In her dedication she says…"it is better to search for the hard question than to accept the easy answer." And in the Foreword, she quotes Laurence Dickie: "What we do is primarily the result of what we are, and that, therefore the efficiency, or otherwise, of our actions will be determined in the main by what we are: that the habit of RIGHT THINKING must be formed before we can expect RIGHT DOING; that character and vision is the bed-rock of all true efficiency."

It would seem that Stein is suggesting that the search for clarity and truth is the preeminent wisdom. Like all excellent teachers, she invites us to stay with the critical questions. The time and energy

spent in critical thinking and reflection can be most productive, enriching the individual and collective efforts of those engaged in organizational governance and leadership. Promoting strategic thinking and strategic conversation will hopefully stimulate right thinking and right doing and as a consequence productive and strategic planning!

How do we choose the most useful tools and practices that work well in the voluntary sector? How do we collectively build in more adaptive capacity—innovation, research, skilled talent, effective community responsiveness, quality accountability, and collaborative efforts? Margaret Wheatley suggests that we are on the cusp of discovering and inventing new organizational forms and that we need to be responsible inventors and discoverers in order to accomplish this work. In *Leadership And The New Science*, Wheatley points out that organizations rarely change by having models from the outside imposed upon them but that we need to look internally, to see one another as critical resources and draw upon the creativity that exists everywhere in our organizations *(Wheatley 1999, 150-51)*. We find these resources in our volunteers, among the people who work in the sector, in our members and participants. Asking the hard questions, focusing on the purpose (mission) of our organizations, looking within for the creative resources among our volunteers, staff, members—all who work in the voluntary sector may help to point us in the right direction. Some of the methodologies of planning in Chapter 5 are new resources for boards and senior staff to consider. They offer new ideas that are emerging in the field of organizational development and provide fresh planning approaches.

Trends and Forces

Social Trends

A clear view of the landscape of the voluntary sector, its scope and diversity, and the trends and forces influencing it may not be readily available even to those who work within the sector. At the local community level, the individual who volunteers to help as a Big Sister, or works on a YWCA planning committee for the Women of Distinction Dinner, delivers meals-on-wheels, sorts clothes and

offers food at the local community Food Bank, may not have a concern about defining the significance of their individual civic gesture and generous participation in the common good. As in the best of relationships this type of volunteering is a mutually satisfying endeavor.

In *Philanthropy Tomorrow*, a recently published paper by the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy (CCP), 10 sector-wide trends are presented with the caveat that fundamental structural change may need to be addressed if the voluntary sector is to build on its strengths and remain a viable segment within Canadian society.

These 10 trends can be viewed in their entirety in this CCP document which offers useful and timely planning information for boards of directors and management and is an excellent resource. For the purpose of this section these 10 trends are combined into three major categories: The Volunteer, Capacity Building, and Ethics and Values Foundation in order to better understand the challenges facing the sector.

Issues around the under-representation in the sector of Canada's diverse ethnicity and youth are a concern. Volunteers are donating more money but less time, and fewer volunteers are doing more of the work. A better-educated and more-sophisticated public are expecting greater returns on their donations. Transparency, accountability, and effective change-making are all critical issues. More people are expecting that voluntary sector agencies look to solutions for societal ills and issues rather than just talking about problems.

Leading thinkers, such as Janice Stein and others in academic institutions, among others are pointing to the need for the voluntary sector to build organizational capacity in order to effectively deliver on their social purpose. Attracting skilled and talented people, strengthening current assets, and finding greater community collaborations within the sector and in conjunction with the private sector are strategic issues needing attention over the next decade.

Canadians place a high degree of trust in the voluntary sector. The private sector has been buffeted recently by sensational scandals like Enron and Arthur Anderson. Companies are responding by paying much closer attention to the need to develop effective codes of ethical values. Ethical governance and operations are seen as

essential to contribute to improvement in public trust and to run businesses effectively.

Capacity Building

A December 2002 CCAF–FCVI document, *Reporting Principles*, takes public performance reporting to a new level and suggests a number of societal trends that are forcing the Canadian government and the public sector to "modernize their approaches to governance and management in order to meet these challenges." These trends will certainly migrate to the voluntary sector and indeed already are influencing the way the sector works.

These trends include:

- Bigger, better educated, and increasingly diverse populations
- The accelerating revolution in the way we obtain, use, store, and communicate information
- Declining deference to authority and trust in institutions
- The increasing speed at which governments* are expected to function (add voluntary sector organizations* here)
- Increasingly complex and interdependent public policy issues, organizations, and relationships.

The responses by the private and public sectors to deal with issues around public trust, transparency, and accountability will be expected of the voluntary sector. Resting on the laurels of community goodwill cannot be a reliable management approach. If building capacity will necessarily require greater financial support for the sector, then, concomitantly, transparency and accountability will be required too. If the values espoused by the sector and publicly expressed in the vision and mission statements are to be credible, then attention needs to be given consistently and thoroughly to the questions: are we true to our purpose (mission) and are we truly doing what we say we are doing?

If the public demand for greater accountability and ethical activities from business and government is high, then their expectation of the voluntary sector is even higher because the sector espouses the values of promoting the common good and being trustworthy.

As noted in the CCAF document, public deference towards authority and institutions has dramatically changed. Of all the myriad of challenges and opportunities facing the voluntary sector, the social compact with the community and the high level of public trust are too valuable to squander.

The response to these major trends will require truly visionary leadership and demonstrated ethical governance from the sector.

When boards of directors and senior staff determine they want to complete a strategic plan, they would do well to engage in a process of strategic thinking and asking some of these "big questions" as the first step in any planning process.

In spite of the challenges facing the sector regarding the issues around volunteerism, many people are volunteering generously and effectively in their communities. For those people who volunteer in a leadership capacity on boards, there are compelling reasons for them to gain a thorough clarity around these trends and the essential elements of this sector and to understand their unique responsibility as board members. Even a clear name for the sector seems to be a problem. Variously it is called charitable, nonprofit, not-for-profit, non-governmental (NGO), community-based organization (CBO) or third sector. The diversity of descriptors and extensive scope and range of services provided signal some of the difficulty of creating a strong, visible sector. The public understands the concepts of private and public sectors; the challenge for the voluntary sector is to be as clearly identified as well. Building an identifiable visible sector will be a positive step towards building the capacity of the sector.

Among various sector leadership groups, the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, the Voluntary Sector Initiative, United Way of Canada, national sector groups like the YWCA of/du Canada, the YMCA of/du Canada, and foundations like The Muttart Foundation and the McConnell Family Foundation all have documented and supported growth in the sector. It is not in the scope of this paper to describe the voluntary sector in more detail, but boards of directors and senior staff, when determining their planning process, would do well to have a clear grasp of current sector work, its progress, and the future trends influencing the sector.

Role of Volunteer Board Governance and Leadership in Strategic Planning

Volunteer Board

Assuming a governance position on a board, the volunteer faces a unique role and responsibility. Their core function and raison d'être, whether it be on a board of a small agency or a multi-million dollar health corporation, is to act in a governing and fiduciary role on behalf of the community.

The board of directors, those volunteers who assume governance positions, plays a strategic and pivotal role in the organization and in any strategic planning process.

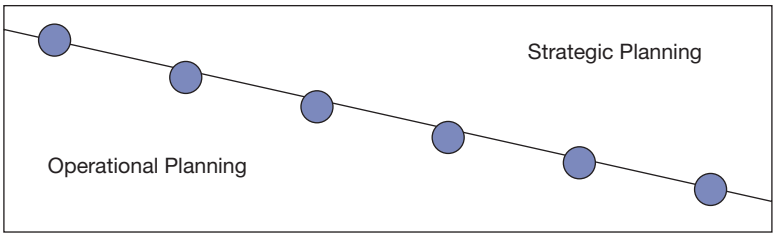
Within the strategic planning process, the following diagram outlines the two areas of responsibility of the board and differentiates it from the management-leadership role and responsibility. Every organization must be successful at both forms of planning. It is also worth noting that the line between strategic and operational is permeable.

When we consider Block's three chief concerns of management—definition of purpose, the use of power, and distribution of wealth—from the perspective of the voluntary sector, we see they are both strategic and operational functions.

Strategic and Operational Planning

In order to remain healthy, every organization must be successful at two types of planning: strategic and operational.

Differences between Strategic and Operational Planning:



• Deals with shorter-term future (one year or less)	• Deals with the longer-term future
• Deals with maintaining programs	• Deals with growth or change
• Deals with "parts"	• Deals with "whole" system
• Driven by budgets	• Driven by vision

In board governance the legal, financial, and other fiduciary requirements of the volunteer are well-documented. Most organizations cover these in their board orientations and bylaws. The Muttart Foundation has a readily available series of workbooks on governance issues to help volunteers.

Boards govern and are responsible for leading the strategic thinking process and consequently the direction of the organization. It is the essential responsibility of the volunteer when s/he accepts to serve on a board.

> Reflecting on my experience with policy governance and now with direct experience in how major government departments operate, I can attest to the importance of ensuring that there is a strong vision clearly and strategically communicated and operationalized.
>
> Creating a strong vision is the role of the board. The board must not only create the vision but must find strategic ways to communicate it succinctly and repeatedly. The Board is also responsible for evaluating whether this vision is being advanced through the activities of the organization.
>
> This speaks to the need for the board to have its voice be strong, clear and unified to all its members. There can be no better investment of time and energy for a board of directors. Without this as a starting point it is not possible for the organization to meet its goals. *(Carolyn Guest, President, YWCA of Saskatoon Board of Directors, 1995–1996)*

As noted, there are a wide range of books, resources, and theories on board governance for the voluntary sector. These can help to inform volunteers on the issues and responsibilities of governance and assist them in finding suitable models on which to draw.

One popular example is the work of John Carver on policy governance, who has written extensively on creating a model of policy governance for the voluntary sector. John Carver says:

> If I had to isolate one critical perspective (of governance) it would be this: governance is a "downward" extension of ownership, not an "upward" extension of management. The proper practice of governance, then, is more a sub-category of ownership, than a sub-category of management. *(Oliver, et al., 1999, XVI)*

Carver goes on to suggest that the critical governance characteristic is not to "run" the organizational and operational tasks, but rather to be allied with "owning"—acting on behalf of the members or general public.

The volunteers on the board are owner representatives of the organization—acting on behalf of others. In the case of the voluntary sector, ownership is acting on behalf of the community. This particular style of governance leadership exercised by the volunteers who comprise the board, Carver calls servant-leadership, a term borrowed from the leadership writings of Robert Greenleaf serves to capture Carver's concept of board leadership.

Using this servant-leadership metaphor, Carver describes the important "balancing" function of the board. By "balancing," he means that the board must be able to speak with "one authoritative voice in the on-site leadership of the organization while exercising a type of control that safeguards owners values while optimally empowering the human beings employed in the enterprise. *(Oliver et al., 1999, XVII)*

It is widely-known that Carver, among others writing in the field of board governance, contend that traditional governance styles demonstrated by some boards have not exercised this critical balancing function. The permeability of the strategic and operational roles is critical, but boards and senior management would do well to have a thorough and open discussion about their respective roles and duties prior to beginning a strategic planning process.

Board members with an axe to grind or with an individual agenda can often stymie an organization's planning agenda and deflect it from achieving its purpose and services. Individuals or even whole boards, who have interfered in the daily operational matters of the agency do so at the expense of staff expertise and morale. Some boards have been known to take the opposite approach and have been accused later, of being "asleep at the switch," leaving the strategic and governance matters solely to the staff of the agency.

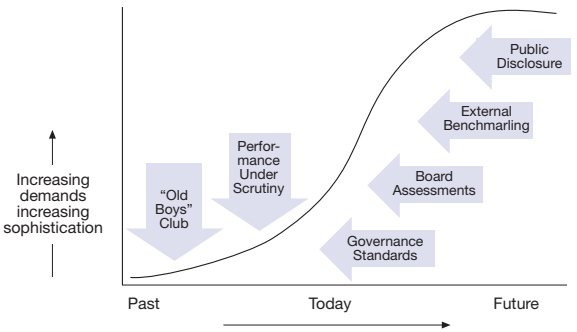
Clearly both extremes demonstrate that these boards are not in balance and that perhaps they have abrogated their ownership and leadership roles.

Before one agency adopted a policy governance model, a story was often told by a former board member exasperated with what she saw as a waste of her time. Apparently hours were often spent at board meetings determining the most suitable times for lane swims. Though this small vignette seems a benign "interference" in operational matters and is not intended to be critical of those excellent volunteer board members, it does demonstrate the importance of clarifying the difference between the board's strategic function and the staff's operational responsibilities. It also illustrates how the skills, expertise, and job responsibilities of staffs can be undermined.

Often the talents and expertise of excellent board members are squandered when they are not focused on their primary task of strategic thinking and acting. Having a knowledge of effective governance principles and exercising the board discipline to apply these principles is one of the essential elements of board governance. A thorough review of these matters before delving into strategic planning would be time well spent.

Stella Thompson of Governance West Inc. captures in the following graph, the growing awareness and knowledge of effective governance practices. The demands and expectations of an educated and informed volunteer is certainly contributing to this positive process.

Changes in the World of Board Governance have been slow



Thompson goes on to emphasize that four essentials are implicit in Board governance:

- Right processes
- Right strategic direction
- Right people
- Right values

(Thompson, October 2002, 6)

Good stewardship of the rich array of human talent, effort, and energy that generous volunteers bring to the voluntary sector demands that clear and effective governance models be exercised. To keep the public trust, this is one of the most critical areas that needs constant scrutiny, research, and ongoing training.

Reflecting the Community

Not only do we need to understand the role of the volunteer in governance and leadership with respect to strategic planning, but attention needs to be given to succession planning on boards. In *Philanthropy Tomorrow*, two trends stand out that deserve further comment.

- Core supporters are giving more; volunteers are giving less.

Canadians donated more that $5 billion to charities in 2000, up 6 per cent from 1997. During the same time, more than one million volunteers stopped lending a hand, a drop of 4 per cent from 1997 participation rates. The 1997 data found that the sector's core supporters were significantly older (over 45 years), more religious, and less ethnically diverse than the majority of the population. Those core supporters contributed more than half of all donations and 42 per cent of all volunteer hours.

- Canada's ethnic diversity is not being represented.

In the past 40 years, Canada's ethnicity has changed dramatically. The majority of immigrants are from Asia and the Middle East. Visible minorities will account for one in five Canadians by 2016. The two large younger generations that are growing are people born

outside of Canada and Aboriginal youth and they are currently underrepresented in the leadership, culture and orientation of the voluntary sector. *(Philanthropy Tomorrow, 7)* Having a diverse pool of volunteers enhances the organization's ability to achieve its mission by encouraging appropriate involvement reflective of the community at large.

Finally, in summary, volunteer board members should embrace principles of good governance that include:

- Knowledge, ability, and commitment
- An understanding of the board's purpose and of whom the board is representing
- An understanding of the objectives and strategies of the organization
- An understanding of and reasonable information about good governance
- Preparedness to ensure that objectives are met and that performance is satisfactory
- Accountability to those they represent.

Commitment to the board's most strategic role, is to be good stewards of holding and communicating the vision of the organization.

As Carver comments, "Merely understanding what management is doing is not a governance principle." *(Oliver, et al., 1999, 223)*

Positive Leadership Trends

Though the volunteer role is an essential aspect of the voluntary sector, many thousands of people earn their living in and contribute daily to the vitality of the sector. Their leadership, as employees, represents a strongly committed group of people, often underpaid and overworked. Their work represents a huge contribution to the common good.

The challenges, today, of leadership within the sector are enormous. By leadership here, I mean, those whose primary responsibility it is to be answerable to the board of directors and thus by extension to the members or general public. It is important to note that qualities of leadership do not always reside only in those designated person whose nameplates identify them as CEO. Change leaders can be found among all persons attached to the organization. And it can be noted that at differing times in an organization's history and "life-cycle," different types of leaders are needed and hopefully can emerge. However, in the strategic planning process or change process, the designated leadership ultimately has the responsibility to facilitate and lead the process. In Chapter 5 the different methodologies offer varying opportunities for considerable involvement by many, if not all, people in the organization in the planning process. Some methods are more widely participatory than others.

In a recent study by Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western University, the authors identified five types of positive change leaders. The study was conducted post September 11, 2001 and was intended to be an exploration into exemplar visions, leaders, and practices in order to uncover sources of innovation and creativity in the world of business. The document, entitled *Spirit in Business: Mindfulness, Ethics and the Bottom Line,* is a fascinating look at positive leadership trends that are emerging. The study looked at a global perspective into the topic of business, its change leaders and their theories of positive change.

The study notes that leadership happens in many ways in society and at many hierarchical levels in organizations.

- Senior executives, at the top levels of their organizations who are willing to share their highest hopes for creating new examples and practices of business are seen as agents for positive change.

- Change agents were identified as leaders from every level within the organization. These people are seen as "cultural creatives," dedicated people from anywhere in the organization.

- Ideas leaders who come from among organizational theorists, scholars,and futurists contribute their transformative ideas that can be catalysts for innovative practices and disrupt the status quo, thus creating new possibilities within the organization.

- Social entrepreneurs, also identified in this study, are those dedicated innovators and networkers who "are possessed by an idea, people who will persevere, refine, test, and then spread or market a positive change idea until it becomes a new pattern for society as a whole." Examples abound in our own localities of change agents, those leaders within our organizations who not only envision fresh ways of work but have the capacity and tenacity to implement the visionary ideas into reality.

- Wisdom companions are also identified as change agents, those people who care about creating positive futures. Children, youth, elders and respected spiritual teachers are engaged in finding successful ways to "elevate the dialogue and bring practices for accessing the best of our human strengths, make meaningful commitments and useful purpose to our collective endeavors."

Perhaps more than ever in the voluntary sector, locally and indeed globally, we need to access a wide range of leadership skills, identify creative and innovative ways so that our social institutions, private, public, and voluntary are more responsive to creating positive changes in our communities, country, and world.

> The world is in transition. Advancements in communications and transportation have changed how we perceive borders. People, information, goods and services circle the globe more quickly than ever. Globalization is shifting power from sovereign states to global markets. It is re-defining democracy and culture. It is unleashing competition in every segment of the economy. It is bringing social activists, entrepreneurs, journalists, labour organizations, academics and many others into the global arena to engage the challenges of the 21st Century.
>
> How will these socio-economic forces reshape the environment in which Canadian charities and non-profits operate over the next five years? *(Philanthropy Tomorrow, 7)*

The challenges posed by the authors in this CCP scenario touch on similar themes as in the Case Western University inquiry. They highlight the increasing complexity and driving forces affecting our social institutions that Mary Robinson, former High Commissioner on Human Rights spoke on so eloquently in her December 7, 1998 address quoted earlier.

There is a growing global awareness and need for engagement of citizens to participate in solving critical human and environmental concerns. The growth of this civic engagement and democratic actions, as expressed in and through the voluntary sector are important trends for the 21st century.

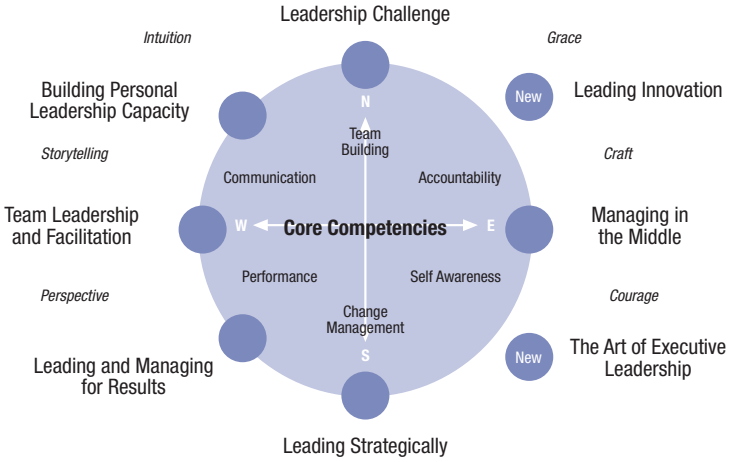
Fritjof Capra's words that "the design principles of our future social institutions must be consistent with the principles of organization that nature has evolved to sustain the web of life" *(Capra, 2002, XIX)* capture these leading edge and transformative ideas. Leaders who are innovative, creative, and visionary are well suited to the 21st Century and indeed are needed more than ever.

Before developing a strategic plan or change initiative a deep analysis of the kinds of transformative change leaders and wisdom persons needed to inform the planning process may well be worth the effort. Margaret Wheatley suggests a great description of leadership for our times "the essential work of the leader is to ask the Big Questions, "Who are we? What are we trying to do?" *(Wheatley Conference, 1999)*

Characteristics of Leadership

When one scans the recent and emerging literature of organizational and leadership theory and the growing use of language of nature, spirituality and the arts gives us an indicator that some of these changes in our social institutions are already underway. The 2003 Banff Centre's Leadership Guide is an example of how leading edge-thinkers and practitioners of organizational development are incorporating a more comprehensive and inclusive view of leadership into their lexicon. Their Leadership Development Framework demonstrates this point.

Emerging Capacities



Leadership Development Framework

(Banff Centre Leadership Guide, 2003)

Inundated with increasing technological complexity and dramatic global events in the geopolitical and environmental realms, there is a growing recognition that we need to access deeper sources of wisdom and truth to be engaged citizens and credible leaders within socially purposeful organizations.

Grace, intuition, courage, perspective, storytelling, and craft would not normally be the language of scientific management theory, but in the changing thinking about organizational development in business and the voluntary sector such shifts are occurring. These shifts will prompt us to look at other models and methodologies of strategic planning.

The words used in the above graph to characterize leadership qualities describe virtues, moral integrity, and alternative ways of seeing. They describe innate elegance, mindfulness, and artistic skillfulness as leadership characteristics.

An etymological look at some of these key words used in the Banff Leadership model provides some ideas about qualities of leadership

the voluntary sector needs to recruit. Gifted and visionary people, representative of the diversity of Canadian society, will strengthen and enhance the voluntary sector's contributions.

Virtue (N)	moral excellence (Latin: related to virile)
Courage (N)	ability to disregard fear/or to act on one's beliefs (Latin: cor – heart)
Grace (N)	attractiveness, elegance of manner or courteous good will
Intuition (N)	immediate insight or understanding without conscious reasoning (Latin: to look)
Perspective (N)	mental view of the relative importance of things (Latin: to look at)
Craft (N)	special skill or technique to make in a skillful way

(The Oxford Dictionary, 1996)

Intuition and perspective have to do with alternate ways of seeing and knowing, this is currently and popularly know as emotional intelligence

> Stories are an old way of organizing knowledge, but their place in the world has been less visible since the rise of scientific philosophy during the Enlightenment. *(Schwartz, 1996, 38)*

Chapter 4

Chapter 4

Essential Elements

“Healthy Soil Makes Healthy Plants”

- **Essential Elements of Planning**
- **Planning to Plan**
- **The Change Process Framework**
- **Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles**
- **Guiding Principles as a Bedrock for Effective Change: An East Coast Story**

Essential Elements of Planning

In Chapters 2 and 3, I have tried to outline a broader view of the voluntary sector and the importance of its values and ethical basis. With this as a background, I want to look at the essential elements needed in all strategic planning and change processes regardless of methodology.

All effective strategic planning should be preceded by the development of a vision, mission, and values process. For organizations with an established vision and mission statement, a revisiting and reaffirmation of these elements may be all that is necessary. For organizations desiring to develop or renew these foundational guideposts the following section outlines a suggested approach.

In addition to vision and mission statements, many organizations are articulating their values statements and incorporating a set of guiding principles that form a framework for ethical decision-making.

In Chapter 3, I used a quote from Janice Stein's work where she states that one of life's more challenging tasks is to be willing "to search for the hard questions rather than accept the easy answer." Our actions will be determined by what we are. Strategic planning can be a bit of a seductive process. We can use all the tools and techniques of planning and believe we've come up with the clear road map for organizational change. However, if we fail to be willing to uncover the "Big Questions," as Peter Senge calls them, or deal with complexity and the deeper issues involved in true and transformative change—strategic planning will disappoint us.

> At work we try to change the culture, increase the performance, find and keep great people, deal with failure, develop leaders, predict where our business is going, be socially responsible. We can pursue methods and techniques for answering these questions or we can appreciate their profound complexity. *(Block, 2002, 16)*

As both Senge and Block note, we can be seduced into thinking that if we apply certain techniques, pursue the newest organizational methods, we will be ultimately successful in our planning endeavor. Staying with the difficult questions and challenges facing our organizations and being willing to tolerate a thorough and reflective

review of "who we are? and what are we trying to do?" as Wheatley tells us can serve as a positive step for effective change.

Peter Block, in his newest book, *The Answer to How is Yes* examines how we have become obsessed with tools and techniques to institute substantive change in ourselves, in our social and business institutions, without taking the necessary time to reflect and think deeply, uncovering deeper questions—"The Big Question." He suggests that by staying with the more superficial questions, we are prevented in fully engaging ourselves and organizations in making real transformative change.

I will outline Block's thinking by looking at two types of questions. By juxtaposing the questions we can view one method of asking deeper, more reflective questions—the "Big Questions."

"Yes" is the right stance says Block. "The alternative to asking "how?" questions is saying "yes"—not literally but as a symbol of our stance towards the possibility of more meaningful change." *(Block, 2002, 27)*

"How?" questions lead us to look for answers external to ourselves—more suitable to the "tools and techniques" style of change management. The importance, repeated once again by Block, is to ask the right questions, "about values, purpose, aesthetics, human connection, and deeper philosophical inquiry."

Block is not discounting that "How?" questions have their purpose and place, but they do not go deep enough or far enough. "To commit to the course of acting on what matters, we postpone the "How?" questions and precede them with others that lead us to more questions."

So, once again, preceding any strategic planning endeavour, time taken for answering some "yes" questions "will draw us into what matters…for organizations as well as individuals." (Block, 2002, 27)

When we look only for tools and techniques which are part of the "How?" questions, we preempt other kinds of learning and thinking.

In a sense, if we really want to know what really works, we must carefully decide which are the RIGHT questions for this moment. Picking the right question is the beginning of action on what matters, and as a consequence—this is what works. *(Block, 2002, 39)*

A Sample of Asking the Right Questions

"How?" Questions	"Yes!" Questions

Question One

How do you do it? → What refusal have I been postponing?

The shift is from a question of method to one of choice even if the choice is to say no. Sometimes we create something new in a change process by knowing what to refuse.

Question Two

How long will it take? → What commitment am I willing to make?

When something is truly important to us the question of time shifts to myself and ourselves. The care and commitment needed to produce the change becomes my freely chosen yes.

Question Three

How much does it cost? → What is the price I am willing to pay?

The real cost of change is measured by our efforts, our will, our courage, and our persistence in the face of difficulty. Am I/are we willing to pay this price?

Question Four

How do you get those people to change? → What is my contribution to the problem I am concerned with?

This is a shift in accountability. Too many decisions to initiate a change are made by those untouched by the change effort—to keep us honest we need to become the change we want to see.

Question Five

How do we measure it? → What is the crossroad at which I find myself at this point in my life/work?

The central question is to explore here is whether the change we are considering will have meaning for us, our institution, our world. It is important to measure progress but a deeper underlying criteria first needs asking is a "values" question.

Question Six

How are other people doing it successfully? → What do we want to create together?

This sixth question represents the tension of learning from others and what remains to be discovered. It also points to the fact that we live in an interdependent world. Individually and collectively, we have the wisdom we need to get the results we want. The challenge is to trust and act on that wisdom. How many times have we brought in an outsider to tell us what we already knew was true?

Reflective Practice: The Saskatoon Community Service Village Experience

In the previous section, Block challenges us to ask different questions of ourselves as we initiate a planning process. By viewing ourselves and our organizations from a different perspective through the technique of asking "harder," more challenging, and often the more "difficult" questions, we are called to question more deeply and engage more thoroughly in the planning process. By probing more deeply, the resulting process encourages us to ask the right questions which prompt the beginning of action on what truly matters and creates the climate for effective and authentic change—change that truly works!

In order to create the appropriate climate for this type of reflective questioning, a brief explanation of how the six founding partners of the Village used Reflective Practice days might provide the reader with inspiration ideas on how to implement this tool into their own planning process. For a fuller description of the origins and development of the Saskatoon Community Service Village project I refer the reader to Marcia Clark's study on this co-location project which took place in Saskatoon between 1996 and 2000.

For the purpose of this workbook, I will focus on how we used the Reflective Practice days as a planning tool that encouraged, yes and even forced us, to delve more deeply into the reasons we were building the Village and the significant matters that needed our thoughtful attention. From 1996 to 1998, a broad-based community development process occurred and through this the YWCA and the five founding partners committed themselves to build the Village. Fundraising, volunteer recruitment, the development of a new legal and governance structure, building the vision, mission, and guiding principles, creating a new umbrella culture, operational matters, and the challenges of construction were just some of the myriad of matters that preoccupied the six executive directors, our boards of directors, and staff. How to focus ourselves? How to provide ourselves with a calm eye in the midst of the storm of the thousands of issues and daily responsibilities resulted in our collective decision to schedule regular full-day Reflective Practice Retreats. Meeting every four to six weeks, sometimes more often if we needed to, this Reflective Practice day was intended to be different from the multitude of business meetings we had to attend to deal with other Village matters. From 1998 to 2000, a weekly schedule of business meetings on the Village would entail such matters as the Building Committee, Fund Raising Committee, Finance Committee, Communications Committee, Village Advisory Committee, and so on. But for the Reflective Practice Day, we chose an off-site location conducive to reflection and away from the more than hectic demands of our daily schedules. This choice of off-site location was purposeful and significant. During the various stages of the development of "the Village," the six executive directors continued to have responsibility for our respective organizations while together we were founding and building a completely new umbrella organization. Finding another space was important. The initial purpose of our Reflective Practice Days as a planning tool was to create a climate for the senior leadership to explore deeper questions and realities of what we were attempting to accomplish. We looked long and hard on our vision, mission, guiding principles—the purposes and future directions of our intended merger. To assist us we invited a highly respected and skilled individual to act as our facilitator. In all our business meetings, we regularly shared the chair and recorder positions. For our Reflective Practice Days we all needed to participate fully and also benefited from having a trusted and skilled advisor to push, encourage, challenge, and support the implementation of our dream into reality. Dennis Chubb, chair of the

Saskatoon Regional Intersectoral Committee, gave generously of his time for over two years as our facilitator for the Reflective Practice Days.

During the actual day, we dealt with the development of our essential elements, our guiding principles, the constitution and bylaws, the memorandum of understanding, our changing and emerging cultures and the development of our shared values. We were creating a new community "commons," a collaborative venture that has now become a vital and vibrant community centre. Fifteen voluntary sector agencies are now housed in the Village, and we could have many more agencies if space allowed.

We structured the Reflective Practice Days with input and discussion among ourselves and with support from Chubb. He took on the responsibility of shaping each successive agenda from our input and needs. Chubb's skill as a facilitator would mirror Peter Block's ideas as already noted, by challenging us to ask the Yes! questions. The discipline and commitment of our leadership team to carve out significant portions of time in order to accomplish our collective strategic vision was significant. Trust and confidence was developed as well as a safe place to disagree with and challenge each other was encouraged. The commitment to keep quality time and create an appropriate environment for the Yes! type questions, to engage ourselves in right thinking before taking actions was, in my opinion, the single most successful planning tool we used to bring the Village into reality.

Planning to Plan

Prior to determining the particular methodology of strategic planning, boards of directors and senior leaders would do well to think about preparing a "Planning to Plan" document. This is often called the CHANGE PROCESS framework and is, in effect, a roadmap to guide the organizational planning journey.

Most organizational change theorists, regardless of their preferred strategic planning methodology, reiterate the importance of engaging in strategic thinking before doing any *strategic planning.* The two change process frameworks included here are templates to guide *strategic thinking*. They are the steps in preparing the planning process.

The Change Process Framework:

Model #1

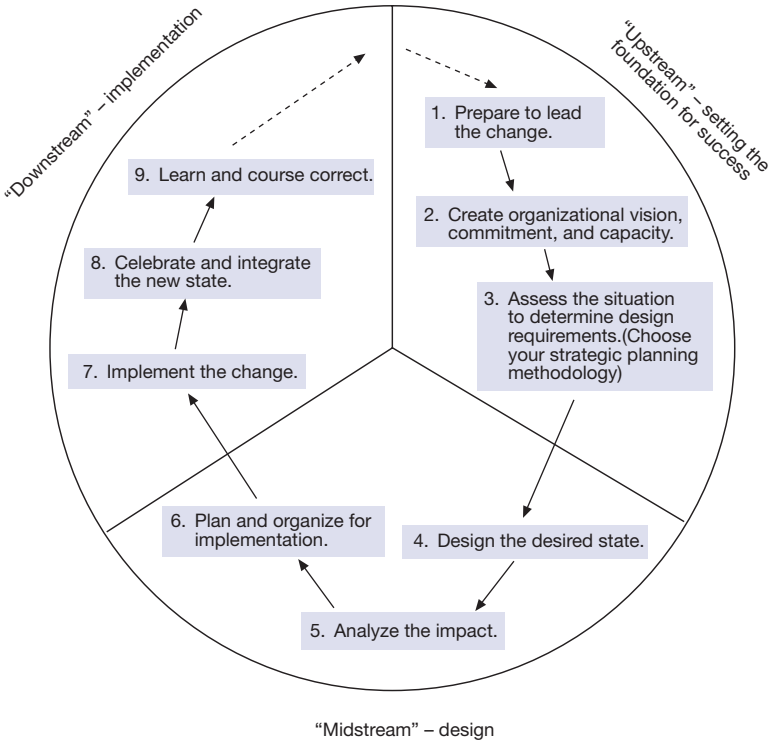
Beyond Change Management: Advanced Strategies for Today's Transformational Leaders by Anderson and Anderson Ackerman is an excellent resource for planning teams who are looking for fresh ideas on organizational development and transformative change.

Their nine-phase change process framework follows a conceptual map. It is a generic model "created to assist leaders to take a conscious approach to leading transformation. It can be tailored for all types of change—from smaller, less complex, to a more comprehensive change process." *(Anderson and Anderson Ackerman, 2001, 170)*

According to the two authors who designed this model, "through and from their work in organizational development, this concept has an inherent flow and logic. However, they caution, that although the concept has a sequential flow it should not be assumed that planners have to complete one phase after the other in a linear fashion.

"In actual practice, transformation is not linear and you may be in two, three or even four phases simultaneously. You may do the work of some phases in parallel with doing the work of other phases. This model is a *thinking discipline* not a project management methodology." *(Anderson and Anderson Ackerman, 2001, 170)*

The Change Process Model



(Anderson/Ackerman, 2001, 172)

Model #2

The second change process framework is adapted from *Strategic Planning for Non-Profit Organizations: A Practical Guide and Workbook* by Michael Allison and Judy Kaye.

The Strategic Planning Process

Getting Setup for Success		Defining your Challenge		Setting Your Course	Keeping the Plan Relevant	
Phase 1	**Phase 2**	**Phase 3**	**Phase 4**	**Phase 5**	**Phase 6**	**Phase 7**
Getting Ready	***Articulating mission and vision***	***Assessing the Environment***	***Agreeing on Priorities***	***Writing the Strategic Plan***	***Implementing the Strategic Plan***	***Monitoring and Evaluating***
Phase/Steps	**Phase 2**					
• Identify reasons for planning • Check readiness • Choose planning participants • Summarize organizational history and profile • Identify additional research or information needed to incorporate into plan • Write a "Plan for Planning"	• Write or revisit mission statement, vision statement.	• Review former planning strategies • Gather input from internal/ external stakeholders • Gather input on programs • Gather additional strategic information about organization	• SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) • Choose criteria in setting priorities • Select future strategies • Write goals and objectives • Develop long range financial projections	• Write the strategic plan • Present draft plan for review • Adopt the strategic plan	• Develop annual operating plan • Develop annual operating budget.	• Evaluate the strategic planning process • Monitor and update the strategic plan.

Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

Regardless of the strategic planning methodology, developing the organizational vision, mission, and guiding principles are essential components. These form the foundation for any renewal of an established agency or "founding" process for a new organization.

In this part each of these essential elements is explained and a suggested method for developing them is proposed. The following definitions clarify each element.

Vision identifies the common, ideal state that the organization is committed to bring about in the world.

Mission describes the purpose(s) of the organization. It is a collaborative expression of the purpose, intentions and priorities of the organization. The vision and values of the organization are implicitly expressed in the mission statement.

Guiding Principles are the core value statements of the organization. They declare the ethical foundation and values on which the organization are founded. They form the ethical parameters and framework on which all strategic directions and decisions are formed.

Developing Your Organization's Vision

Characteristics of an effective vision statement include:

- A one-line statement that presents a written visionary message matched by visionary behaviors.
- An image captured in words of future success or commitment.
- An inspiring influence that is an ideal; is positive and encourages people to identify their common aspirations and creates congruency in the organization.

Martin Luther King, Jr. created one of the most stirring visions for a people, a nation, indeed for our world in his "I Have A Dream" speech. This great civil rights leader and humanitarian declared his electrifying vision that inspired the civil rights movement. If people denigrate the significance or usefulness of reflecting deeply on and discovering a collective vision for people to commit to, Dr. King's speech is a good example to counteract the argument that this "vision thing" is a waste of time!

Some theorists on strategic planning identify the vision as a success statement and although the success of the organization is a worthy goal; expressing the vision as an "ideal commitment" that the group/organization will work toward often has more power to motivate.

How can we discern these non-material forces operating in an organization in order to capture these ideals into an effective vision statement?

Margaret Wheatley describes the following exercise that neatly demonstrates the reality of these non-material forces: culture, values, ethics, and vision.

> Each of these concepts describes a quality of organizational life that can be observed in behavior yet doesn't exist anywhere independent of those behaviors. Once when I was working on customer service for a large retail chain, I asked employees to visit several stores. After spending time in many stores, we all compared notes. To a person, we agreed that we could "feel" good customer service when we walked in a store. We tried to get more specific by looking at visual cues, merchandise layouts, facial expressions—but none of these were sufficient to explain the sure sense we had when we walked into that store that we would be treated well. Something else was going on. We could feel it; we just couldn't describe why we felt it. *(Wheatley, 1999, 54)*

Wheatley promotes the idea that to be really effective and transformative, vision statements have to come off the walls, plaques and posters and be truly integral to what is lived out by the people in the organization. "What is it that…" inspires, motivates, encourages is a good lead question to ask when determining your vision statement.

She bases her thinking on the emergence in new science of the theory of fields; invisible, intangible, inaudible, tasteless, and odorless. *(Wheatley, 1999, 52)*

Field theory is like a vast ocean of forces and reality that surround us. "Who has seen cyberspace?" We all rely on more and more these intangible connections of interacting with each other and acquiring immense stores of knowledge, information sharing and communication.

> While I have no need to affirm the actual presence of fields in those retail stores I visited years ago, I am positive that in each one where customers felt welcome, there was a leader who, in word and deed, filled space with her clear and consistent messages about how customers were to be served. The field was strong in its congruence; it influenced behavior only in one direction. Because of the power of this field, the outcome was assured: outstanding customer service. *(Wheatley, 1999, 55)*

Two methods of developing a vision statement are included here.

Model I: Developing a Vision Statement: "Backing Into A Vision"

Tackle the following questions one by one:

1. Have you ever been part of a really great team? (Answer as individuals speaking to the full group. Any team experience will do.)

2. What was different about this team? (Identify all the special qualities or elements that made this a special team. Write them on flip chart paper and post around the room.)

3. How can we, as a team, create those kinds of feelings here? (Brainstorm ideas and choose one that fits for everyone in your group.)

4. What would we commit ourselves to? (At this point the group commits itself to one or more initiatives emerging from a shared set of priorities.)

Purpose

- A warm up exercise
- Helpful to surface common goals
- Helpful in surfacing people's feelings and commitments

Time

One hour

Supplies

Flipchart, markers, post it notes

Participants

An intact team with one person agreeing to act as scribe. *(Senge, 1994, 340)*

Model II: Vision Exercise

Purpose:

To define common vision at the team level.

Overview:

Follow a series of questions to uncover issues.

Participants:

A planning team (can be done without a facilitator). One person volunteers to be scribe. All agree on creating a respectful listening environment where everyone agrees to participate and everyone is heard.

Environment:

A circle room arrangement in a pleasant setting without interruption is best.

Time:

This process could take a minimum of one hour.

Supplies:

Flip chart and felt pens.

The following questions are seeds to stimulate deeper questions and help to emerge issues and ideas towards the goal of building a common and shared vision. They can be adapted to your own organization but the questions all promote strategic thinking and discussion.

Step 1: A Vision of the Future

It is five years from now and you have created the ideal organization. Now, as a team, it is your task to describe in a clear, realistic picture the shared vision of your future organization.

Questions:

Set 1

- Who are our organization's stakeholders?
- How do we work with them?
- How do we produce something of value for them?

Set 2

- What are the broad trends in our sector?
- What are local forces impacting our organization?
- How do we work with other similar organizations in our community?
- Where do we compete?
- Where do we collaborate?

Set 3

- What is our unique contribution to our community? To our world?
- What impact does our work have in our community?

Set 4

- How are our programs and organization supported?
- How do we make money?
- How do we attract and deploy our resources (human and financial)?

Set 5

- What does our organization look like?
- In what ways is our organization a great place to work?

- How do we handle good times?
- How do we handle bad times?

Set 6

- What are our values?
- How do people treat each other?
- How are people recognized?

Set 7

- How do we know that the future of our organization is secure? For ourselves? For the next generation?

Step 2: Current Reality

Review the current year in your organization and answer these questions from the perspective of today.

1. What are the critical forms impacting our system?
2. Who are our current stakeholders (internal and external)?
3. Do we perceive changes taking place among our stakeholders?
4. What are the most influential trends today impacting our sector? What major losses do we fear?
5. What aspects of our organization empower people? What aspects of our organization disempower people?
6. What do we know? What don't we know? (That we need to know?)

Step 3: After Creating A Vision

After a session where the first two steps are completed and a draft vision statement is prepared most people find a period of reflection useful. The following questions are good guidelines for both individual and group processing.

- What are the key words?
- How did you feel when you saw/heard the draft vision statement?

- How do you feel about it now?
- Do you feel as if you could own it?
- If not, what changes would have to be made for you to feel a sense of ownership?
- Do you feel it is a meaningful vision, worth your energy and commitment?

(Senge, 1994, 337-9)

Examples of Vision Statements:

Some of the following examples of effective vision statements are included here to demonstrate these characteristics:

We are committed to a strong health care system. *(Health Care Corporation of St. John's, Newfoundland)*

Our vision at the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation is a society in which all Canadians have the opportunity to develop their potential and to engage fully as citizens in the exercise of their rights and responsibilities. *(J.W. McConnell Foundation, Montreal, Quebec)*

Mountain Equipment Co-op is an innovative, thriving cooperative that inspires excellence in products and services, passion for wilderness experiences, leadership for a just world, and action for a healthy planet. Mountain Equipment Co-op since its inception had been guided by a vision statement. In 2000 the Board of Directors reviewed their vision and realized that many of its elements had been achieved. Their previous vision was more Canadian-focused which the 2000 Board felt was limiting their future growth. As a learning and values based company, Mountain Equipment Co-op felt they had learned more about social and environmental responsibility and through a wide consultation Mountain Equipment Co-op developed this new vision statement.

The sustainability of our business depends upon the sustainability of our planet, and its people. Our new vision reflects that belief. *(Mountain Equipment Co-op Website)*

Developing Your Organization's Mission

The second essential element that requires development is the organizational mission statement.

The importance of a mission statement cannot be underestimated. Some organizations recognize the importance of reviewing their mission statements in order to test for "mission drift." Has the organization drifted away from its original purpose or lost clarity of direction are critical questions to be answered.

The mission statement is a description of an organization's purpose, intentions and priorities or values.

"It answers the why you do, what you do, and articulates the organization's reason for being." *(Drucker, Leader to Leader Institute, www.pfdf.org)*

In Profiles of Excellence, four primary characteristics of a successful nonprofit organization are listed as:

- A clear agreed-upon mission statement
- A strong, competent executive director
- A dynamic board of directors
- An organization-wide commitment to fundraising.

The mission statement is critical and failure to clearly state and communicate your organization's mission can have harmful consequences, including:

- Organization members can waste time "barking up the wrong tree."
- The organization may not think broadly enough about different possibilities if its mission statement is unclear.
- The organization may not realize when it is time to go out of business. *(Drucker, Leader to Leader Institute, www.pfdf.org)*

Two other pitfalls could be added to include:

- The organization may be trying to be all things to all people and so "out-of-focus" that nothing gets accomplished well.

- Or organizational drift sets in and the purpose for which the organization was founded is no longer meaningful or understood by the membership.

Putting Words on Paper

The process of actually writing a mission is a challenging endeavour and is best undertaken by one or two excellent writers from the group whose task it is to take all the ideas and compile them into a draft statement. Group writing is not a refined art form and too many people often get bogged down in semantics and wordsmithing. Where group process is significant and important is in the input phase of discussion and ideas that need to be incorporated into the mission statement. At the presentation of the draft mission statement, the final work of the group will be to ensure that their ideas and values are clearly articulated in the final document.

Model 1: The Leader to Leader Institute (formerly the Drucker Foundation) has a useful model for developing a mission statement.

Mission Statement Work Plan

Criteria for an Effective Mission Statement

Step	Task	Who's Responsible
1.	• Establish a mission writing group. • Choose a facilitator and writer(s).	Executive Director
2.	• Adopt criteria for an effective mission statement. • Gather ideas for first draft.	Executive Director and Facilitator
3.	• Develop one or more drafts.	Writer(s)
4.	• Judge initial drafts against criteria. • Suggest revisions or new options.	Mission Writing Group
5.	• Develop second draft.	Writer
6.	• Gain feedback from outside writing group.	Executive Director and Mission Writing Group
7.	• Summarize feedback and second draft.	Executive Director and Writer
8.	• Make recommendations for final revisions and propose a draft mission statement for approval.	Group
9./10.	• Present to Board and stakeholders. Approval by Board of Directors.	Board Chairperson

- Is short, sharply focused, clear and easily understood.
- Defines why we do, what we do; why the organization exists.
- Is broad enough and provides direction for doing the right things.
- Inspires our commitment and says what we want to be remembered for.

(Drucker, Leader to Leader Institute, www.pfdf.org)

Model 2: Another approach to writing a mission statement contains concepts that are critical to define "who" your organization is. The following method describes the process in writing a mission statement.

The author indicates that every mission statement should contain three segments: I. The purpose statement; II. The business statement; and III. Values.

I. The Purpose Statement outlines what your organization seeks to accomplish, why your organization exists, and what the ultimate result of your work is.

Purpose statements usually include two phrases:

- An "infinitive" that indicates a change in status, such as to increase, to decrease, to prevent, to eliminate.
- An identification of the problem or condition to be changed.

An example of a purpose statement is "to eliminate homelessness." The focus on outcomes and results rather than methods; How is the world going to be different? What is going to change?

Another example: the purpose of a mental health counselling agency would never be simply "to provide counselling services," for that is describing a method. Rather the purpose might be "to improve the quality of life" for its clients.

II. The second segment is the Business Statement. This outlines the business your activities and programs your organization chooses to pursue its purpose.

You should answer the question, "what activity are we going to do to accomplish our purpose?"

Example: "There are many ways to work on the problem of homelessness."

- To construct housing for homeless individuals.
- To educate the public and advocate for public policy changes.
- To provide job training to homeless individuals.

Each of these describes potentially different businesses, but all relate to achieving the same purpose. Another hint in writing a mission statement is that business statements often include the verb "to provide" or link a purpose statement with the words "by" or "through."

Example: To eliminate homeless by providing job training to homeless individuals.

III. The third segment of a well-constructed mission statement is to include a Values Statement. By developing a written statement of the values of the organization, people have the opportunity to contribute to the articulation of these values as well as use them to guide and motivate their own behaviors and decisions. The following examples demonstrate the inclusion of all three segments—purpose, business, and values.

Mission Statement Examples:

Volunteer Calgary's mission is "building community through leadership in volunteerism."

Mountain Equipment Co-op: "Mountain Equipment Co-op provides quality products and services for self-propelled wilderness-oriented recreation, such as hiking and mountaineering, at the lowest reasonable price in an informative, respectful manner. We are a member-owned cooperative striving for social and environmental the fundamental reason for Mountain Equipment Co-op's existence.

J.W. McConnell Foundation: "Our mission is to support projects and programs that enhance the ability of Canadians to understand, adapt, and respond creatively to the underlying forces which are transforming Canadian society and the world."

Health Corp. of St. John's, NL: "We, as a regional health care organization with unique provincial responsibilities, are dedicated to the health and wellness of all persons, families, and communities through the provision of comprehensive health care services, education, and research in partnership with government, health related agencies and the community."

Non-Profit Sector Leadership Program at Dalhousie University in Halifax: "The mission of Dalhousie University's Non-Profit Sector Leadership Program is to strengthen civil society through increasing the organizational capacity of voluntary, non-government, and community organizations. It is involved in assisting them to:

- Improve their governance and management practices
- Pursue their missions more effectively and creatively
- Learn from each other locally, nationally and internationally
- Work with other organizations and governments to build stronger communities."

Values and Guiding Principles

The process of articulating, naming, owning, and integrating a core values statement and guiding principles of an organization may do more to promote positive organizational and transformative change than any other component of the planning strategy.

In Chapter 3, I discussed how the corporate business and military-industrial sector had a major influence on the language and methodology of strategic planning. As already has been noted, the language of the corporate world and business sector has had much influence on the public and voluntary sector. Many of these business practices have migrated to the voluntary sector. Now perhaps with growing influence, the voluntary sector can provide good leadership on their values, vision, and mission work and the ethical foundations from which these essential elements spring.

Public trust is the single most important asset of the nonprofit and philanthropic community. Without it, donors will not give and volunteers will not get involved. The rights and privileges accorded to the independent (voluntary) sector are a result of the trust placed

in the sector. In Canada, the Ethical Fundraising and Financial Code has been developed by the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy in a country wide consultation.

"The primary purpose of the code is to assure donors of the integrity and accountability of charities that solicit and receive the financial support." *(CCP Website, www.ccp.ca)*

There are many standards and codes that form the bulk of the ethics and accountability practices of organizations; professional codes of ethics for specific groups, Occupational Health and Safety Codes, Labour Standards laws, and Human Rights legislation to name just a few.

However, now more frequently, voluntary sector organizations are articulating and naming their core values and guiding principles from a broader framework. Along with the vision and mission statements, the ethical principles are intended to be incorporated into the ethos of the organization and be a transparent public representation of what the organization stands for.

"The potent force that shapes behavior is the combination of simply expressed expectations of purpose, intent and values…organizations with integrity have truly learned that there is no choice but to walk their talk." *(Wheatley, 1999, 129)*

Ethics awareness and the realization that creating work environments where people and companies are able to do a good job and operate from an ethical perspective is a growing trend. Just this past March 2003, the first International Funding Raising Summit was held in Toronto. Philanthropic leaders from around the world met to discuss the challenges facing the international charitable sector. The agenda of this first time conference discussed international ethics, accountability and standards with a view to creating a code of universally acceptable ethical standards for the voluntary sector.

Developing Your Organization's Ethics and Guiding Principles

To uncover and articulate your organization's core values and to develop the organization's guiding principles, use the following graph that demonstrates broad themes that need to be covered as you develop and build your organization's guiding principles.

Building an Ethical Orientation

(Centre for Ethica Orientation Website, www.ceo-ethics.com)

The following series of questions are posed as "sign posts" for agencies to reflect on and use for discussions at board and staff level to help with the development of an ethical standard.

Are we asking the right questions?

Do we use enlightened values to inform our decisions?

Do we tell the truth and keep our promises?

Do we win without creating losers?

Have we replaced rules with trust and judgment?

Are we healing the communities we serve?

Is the board measuring ethical performance?

How are ethical values reinforced?

Which values are clear from our history?

Which values are expressed in behavior?

What stories define the organization's culture?

What characteristics have emerged to resolve a past crisis?

How are community values mirrored in the agency?

What values do our members, clients presume of our agency?

What values are discernable in the behavior of the executive director? How are mistakes and ethical problems handled?

What organizational values engender pride?

(Questions have been adapted from two sources: 1. John Della Costa: Centre for Ethical Orientation www.ceo-ethics.com/mission_audit.html 2. Lance Secretan: *Reclaiming Higher Ground*, p. 26)

Guiding Principles as a Bedrock to Effective Change: An East Coast Story

The Health Care Corporation of St. John's, Newfoundland underwent a major restructuring in the mid-1990s. Under the leadership of their CEO, Elizabeth M.Davis, and her transition team, eight different health facilities, three hospital-based schools of nursing, regional ambulance services, and a central laundry all came under this newly-created Health Care Corporation. Serving a regional population base in the eastern Avalon of over 200,000 people, with a staff of over 6,000 employees and 400 physicians, the successful transition was a major undertaking.

In the first months of the corporation's existence four keys to success were:

- The sharing, clarifying and shaping of the vision
- The integration of the community of workers
- The incorporation of the strengths and traditions of the eight facilities
- The nurturing of linkages.

Great emphasis was placed by the CEO Elizabeth Davis on the importance of maintaining of quality health care and the operation of a just and healthy work environment in the midst of changing management, union frameworks, and hospital closure. *(E.M. Davis, and G. Tilley, Governance and Management Issues, 1996)*

To give an ethical foundation and guidance for this major restructuring an Ethics and Values Committee of the board of directors was formed. This committee was comprised of representatives from stakeholder groups. The Ethics and Values Committee put into place a process to determine the corporate values of the newly formed corporation. To highlight the significance of this ethical foundation, against which all decisions of the corporate would be tested, the Ethics and Values Committee report was always scheduled first on the board agenda.

The Ethics and Values Committee began a five-phase process to "uncover implicit values" and to articulate the explicit values in all the eight facilities. Their eventual goals were to develop a vision, mission, values, and guiding principles for the newly-created entity. From eight facilities, each with their long and respected history in the community, one entity would be created, embodying the best of the all the systems. The significance of visionary, principled, and purposeful leadership cannot be underestimated in this necessary merger. Elizabeth Davis, in her own words captures the essence of principled leadership.

> The very first month I accepted the position, even before we actually had any staff or had taken over responsibility for the eight organizations, I developed the draft set of guiding principles which the board gave me the go-ahead to use as an interim document. These initial guiding principles were different from the set of corporate values we later developed.
>
> I used those guiding principles at every meeting with the leaders and staff of the existing eight organizations. I emphasized that they would guide what the new leadership team would try to do and that they had the right to challenge me if they felt we were not acting consistently with the principles. My preoccupation was that a number of significant decisions (*e.g.*, closure of three facilities, move to program management, reduction in numbers of managers) really were not negotiable. They had to be made if we were to survive into the 21st century as a viable tertiary care organization.

> However, how we implemented the decisions was up to us. It was in designing the processes that we were to be guided by the principles. *(E.M. Davis, interview, 2003)*

A decision-making matrix which helped to link the values and guiding principles to the decision-making process was also developed. The essence of Elizabeth Davis' comments that she and the senior leadership would and did use the guiding principles both as a touchstone and bedrock for ethical decision-making is significant.

Clearly naming, articulating, and incorporating these values and guiding principles into both the governance and operational aspects of the organization created a clear and transparent structure.

Developing Values and Guiding Principles Model: St. John's Health Care Corporation

Though this model was created for a multi-facility merger, the principles that the Ethics and Values Committee used are well worth considering as a template for other organizations interested in doing this type of values and ethical orientation work. The model is flexible and adaptable.

Phase I: Historical Review

A small working group of the Ethics and Values Committee reviews all foundational documents (*e.g.*, founding history, mission statement, bill of rights, philosophy of management). The values (implicit or explicit) are named.

Phase II: Interviews

They initiated a group of "roamers," people who would wander throughout all the sites and their tasks were as follows: interview people (staff, clients, visitors) to ask them their perceptions of the values existing at the respective site.

This could be adjusted to suit your own agency, at department levels, with clients and staff, past board members, and volunteers.

Phase III: Compilation

The compiled results from both phases are brought to a leadership retreat for comment and input.

Phase IV: Refining Process

The compiled results are refined by several focus groups that are broadly representative of all stakeholders.

Phase V: Board Approval

The working committee completes the final values statement for board approval.

The values that emerged and were incorporated into the culture and decision-making framework of the Health Care Corporation are as follows:

Respect for Persons: We respect the dignity of all persons.

Caring Community: We believe that care is shown by attitudes and actions of our health care community.

Justice and Fairness: We are committed to an equitable allocation of available resources.

Collaboration: We believe that community teamwork and partnership are essential.

Pursuit of Excellence: We are committed to providing the highest standard of care delivered in a learning environment.

These values and the process are a good example of how to uncover and articulate a value system in your organization. Even in the face of difficult decisions that were non-negotiable, such as the closure of three health care facilities, the values and guiding principles served as the template on how to implement difficult decisions.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5

Four Methodologies for Strategic Planning

"The Right Tools for the Garden Chores"

- Overview
- Methodology 1: The Strategy Change Cycle
- Methodology 2: Applying Scenario Planning to Strategic Planning
- Methodology 3: The Search Conference
- Methodology 4: The Appreciative Inquiry Summit (AI)
- Conclusion and Guiding Principles for Successful Strategic Planning

Overview

Chapter 5 will present planning methodologies taken from some of the current literature in the field of organizational development. Each of the four approaches—The Strategy Change Cycle, Scenario Planning, The Search Conference, and Appreciative Inquiry—presented here come with recommended processes to follow. They are offered as current best practices from the literature but should be considered as guidelines to support your own organizational planning. They are not considered as prescriptive directives. All planning works best when suited to your own organization. It is worth keeping in mind that methodologies, frameworks, and models are a collection of practices and ideas that others have designed and have been implemented as change initiatives in countless organizations with successes and failures. We can all learn from others—both their methods and examples of the challenges and opportunities that can occur in a planning and change process. However, it is important to note that individuals and groups in all organizations can use their own experiences and draw on local expertise in order to plan effectively.

Organizational development theorists and practitioners have been experimenting with large group planning processes for some time. Methods such as the SEARCH Conference, Future SEARCH Conference, OPEN SPACE meetings, Co-operative Inquiry, and Appreciative Inquiry are just some of the models for planned change with large groups. Most of these models are based on positive change theory; they are intended to be widely participatory and democratic, and encompass whole system learning.

Methodology 1: The Strategy Change Cycle

Resources:

Bryson, John M.: *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement* (revised ed.)

Senge, Peter: *The Dance of Change*

Anderson, Dean & Anderson, Ackerman, Linda: *Beyond Change Management: Advanced Strategies for Today's Transformational Leaders*

The Strategy Change Cycle: Why Plan?

Before undertaking a system-wide strategic planning process, a thorough assessment of the reasons for implementing a strategic plan and, conversely, the reasons not to enter into strategic planning should be explored.

Planning to plan is a critical phase for a board of directors and senior staff to undergo before leaping into the fray of strategic planning.

As indicated previously, many voluntary sector organizations, especially smaller and mid-sized agencies often lack the financial and human resource capacity needed to do a major strategic plan. Assessing the pros and cons and weighing the costs can provide useful information.

"Strategic thinking and acting are more important than any particular approach to planning." *(Bryson, 1995, 22)*. The time and energy that board members and staff expend in preparatory thinking, dialogue, and analysis of the particular planning model can in itself be a useful exercise. An informed collective process of reflection and dialogue about the current internal and external environment of the agency can produce useful information on which to base initiatives.

> Strategic planning is a leadership and management innovation that is likely to persist because, unlike many other recent innovations, it accepts and builds on the nature of political decision-making. The raising and resolving of important issues is at the heart of

> political decision-making, just as it is at the heart of strategic planning. Strategic planning seeks to improve on raw political decision making, however, by helping ensure that issues are raised and resolved that benefit the organization, its key stakeholders, and society. *(Bryson, 1995, 20)*

The above represents Bryson's premise on which he builds, what he calls, his preferred approach to strategic planning. The next segment is an abbreviated account of "The Strategy Change Cycle." Bryson describes it as much a strategic management process as it is a strategic planning process, and he builds his model on a considerable body of research and practical examples.

Thinking Strategically

"I skate where I think the puck will be." *Wayne Gretzky*

Bryson uses this quote from the famous hockey player, Gretzky, to illustrate what he means by the preeminent importance of thinking strategically. The prescience to skate to a certain spot on a large ice surface in a highly charged atmosphere suggests that Gretzky is operating at a higher level than simply remembering and repeating charts and game plans developed in the relative calm of a locker room. The skills and insights he demonstrated consistently throughout his career suggest that this gifted athlete often exercised "strategic thinking" in his play. His intelligent play of the game, intuition, perception, and awareness of both his internal capacity and external environment resulted in a much-storied success on the ice.

The description of Gretzky's qualities of leadership characteristics are remarkably similar to the one previously discussed in Chapter 3 on leadership. Craft, grace, intuition, and courage have often been applied to Wayne Gretzky and his leadership abilities are well known. Using this skilled athlete's own description of how he plays the game demonstrates some essential core competencies of leadership. In spite of his smaller build, he said, "I can see the big picture and I have a passion for what I do, I apply dedication to my craft and I let my eyes and my mind do most of the work." *(Gretzky website)*

To build on Bryson's comments about the importance of strategic thinking, a useful method to help asks the "Big Questions" and "thinking strategically" is described in *The Dance of Change* by Peter Senge.

> Based on the assumption that people and groups already have the necessary skills and resources amongst themselves, properly supported groups can sense where powerful strategic possibilities and opportunities for action may lie." *(Senge 1999, 509-10)*

The method: Evoking strategic thinking based on discovering powerful questions.

A. Assess the landscape of your organizational environment:

- Notice the big picture.
- Frame your observations in questions
- Powerful questions provoke deeper thought and meanings, lead to further inquiry, generate energy.

B. Discover core questions:

- Notice patterns.
- Cluster questions into related themes.

C. Create images of possibility:

- Imagine possibilities if your "big questions" were answered.
- Notice evolving creative strategies emerging from "big questions."

D. Evolve workable strategies:

- Pay attention to the compelling questions.
- Pay attention to the images of possibility evoked by the "big questions."

(Senge, 1999, 510-11)

By focusing on essential questions rather than relying on quick fix answers, individuals and groups develop an inquiry-oriented approach.

This framework offers a tool to boards and senior staff in order to strengthen the capacity to think strategically and can be used successfully for any type of planning and strategy session. Strategic planning is one way to help organizations and communities deal with changed circumstances. *(Bryson, 1995, 20)*

To Plan or Not to Plan?

Strategic planning may not be the best course of action for every circumstance and organization.

The benefits that can potentially result are:

A. Promotion of strategic thought and action

- Systematic gathering of information
- Heightened attention to organizational learning
- Priority setting

B. Improved decision-making

- Focus attention on what needs to be faced.
- Clarify communication about the organization.
- Form a basis for effective decision-making.

C. Enhanced organizational responsiveness and improved performance

- Clarify issues.
- Address major concerns.
- Sift through in a measured way competing organizational demands.
- Be attentive to complexity and rapidly changing circumstances.

D. Enhanced capacity of people in the organization

- Organizational and leadership skills flourish.
- Team work contributes to wider organizational planning.
- Skills are enhanced (goal setting, conflict resolution, communications).

Bryson's cautionary comments on when not to plan, present a dilemma as he clearly indicates.

Strategic planning is most needed where it is least likely to work and least needed where it is most likely to work. *(Bryson, 1995, 7-8)*

When not to engage in an extensive strategic planning process:

- The roof has fallen.
- During a major crisis when financial or human resource capacity is sorely lacking.
- The organization or community lacks the necessary skills, resources, or commitment of key decision-makers to produce a good plan.
- The costs outweigh the benefits.
- The organization or community prefers to rely on the vision, intuition, and skill of extremely gifted leaders.
- Incremental adjustments or muddling through in the absence of a guiding vision, set of strategies, or plan are the only process that will work.
- Implementation of strategic plans is extremely unlikely.

(Bryson, 1995, 240)

The Strategy Change Cycle: A 10-Step Process

This 10-step process developed by John Bryson is based on his considerable research and practical applications in the public and nonprofit sector. This, as he indicates, is his preferred methodology for strategic planning. However, he does remind the reader that this format is a general approach to strategic planning and management and could and should be tailored to one's specific organizational situation. *(Bryson, 1995, 38)*

The revised 1995 edition of Bryson's book also contains four case studies of examples of this methodology of strategic planning. The examples are from three public organizations and one nonprofit agency. The case studies provide the reader with empirical evidence on this approach and demonstrate clearly the successes, challenges and learnings in this methodology. *(Bryson, 1995, 228-29)*

The Strategy Change Cycle incorporates the following organizational activities. They will focus the board and senior staff attention on:

- Setting the organization's direction
- Formulating broad policies
- Making internal and external assessments
- Paying attention to the needs of key stakeholders
- Identifying key issues
- Developing strategies to deal with each issue
- Planning review and adoption procedures
- Making fundamental decisions
- Taking action
- Continually monitoring and assessing the results

Thus the Strategy Change Cycle is as much about strategic management as it is about strategic planning.

Bryson outlines the 10-step Strategy Change Cycle and indicates that these should lead to actions, results, and evaluation. These outcomes should emerge at each step in the process and, as a consequence, implementation and evaluation should occur along the planning cycle and not wait until the "end" of the process. Typically most boards and staff will spend a couple of days engaged in a strategic planning process. It is recommended that an off-site location be used where all the participants are able to relax and engage fully in the planning process. With the Strategy Change Cycle, Bryson suggests that most of these 10 steps can be completed in a two-or-three day planning retreat and an additional one day of work a few months later to assess the implementation process of the strategic plan. *(Bryson, 1995, 21-23)*

A core planning team to lead the process and a skillful facilitator to assist in group work are other considerations of time and resources needing to be involved. Additional time from the core planning team may be needed to monitor the process and work with all those involved in implementing the strategies.

Step 1: Initiating and Agreeing on a Strategic Planning Process

- Negotiation phase: key decision makers
- Involve board, staff, and stakeholders
- Assess the organization readiness and ability
- Commitment of time and resources
- Determine who will be involved in planning
- Suggest the development of a strategic planning agreement

A Planning Agreement Should:

- Define the purpose of the planning effort.
- Outline the preferred steps (map).
- Determine the form and timing of reports.
- Outline roles and responsibilities of persons and groups involved.
- Contain a budget of financial and in-kind resources to support the planning process.

(Bryson, 1995, 26)

Step 2: Identify Organizational Mandates

- Review legal, contractual, and fiduciary obligations of the organization.
- Become informed of the historical data on the founding vision or charter of the organization.
- Read up on the major historical changes the organization has gone through—did the original vision and mission of the organization change substantially or has it kept its essence but adapted to the times?

(Bryson, 1995, 26)

This step can really put the organizing committee in touch with the pulse and heartbeat of the agency. If the organization has had a long history of 50 to 100 years or more, patterns of how changes have occurred should emerge. For example, if there had been a major capital building campaign, what were the successes and challenges? Was there wide spread community support or champion donors?

By becoming fully informed about the legal and contractual obligations of the agency, all the board and senior staff are completely informed what is required of the organization and the purpose of the organization.

One of the major pitfalls that voluntary organizations can experience is known as "mission drift." And as has been noted previously, often the culture of voluntary sector organizations causes people to try to do more and more with less and less and as a consequence stray from their essential purpose or mission. Especially organizations that are seen as successful and admired by the community can find that they are expected to continually provide excellent programs, often without the necessary organizational capacity and adequate resources.

A recent comment by a well-known western politician illustrates this point nicely. When asked whether his government should provide a particular social service to a disadvantaged group his retort was "let the churches do it…." This political viewpoint has probably created more pressures on the voluntary sector over the past decade that any other outside environmental force. Provincial and federal governments, in their attempts to address their fiscal realities, have downloaded many essential social services to the voluntary sector without providing the necessary resources and organizational capacity.

This step in the process is a bit of a history journey—learning who were the champion founders, what was it that drove them to create this organization in the first place? By distilling some of the essential founding vision and principles the organization and planning group can uncover some valuable tools that can be applied to the planning process, especially if a review of the vision/mission is warranted.

Step 3: Clarify Organizational Mission and Values

- Identify the stakeholders of the organization.

- Determine what their stake within the organization is (volunteer, member, staff…).
- Evaluate the organizational compliance in light of the stakeholder's point of view. (This may need to be done for each separate stakeholder group.)
- Determine if the organization is meeting the purpose (it was founded for or is currently publicly declared).
- Ask the question: is the existing mission statement true to the organization in the following matters (if a mission statement exists):
  - Its identity
  - Its abiding purpose
  - Its desired response to stakeholders
  - Its philosophy and core values
  - Its ethical standards

OR

- Develop a mission statement—the raison d'être or purpose for the existence of the organization.

Process Guidelines For Developing A Mission Statement

(See Bryson and Alston Workbook)

1. Compile organization's formal and informal mandates.
2. Complete stakeholder analysis.
3. Fill in mission statement worksheets.
4. Write a draft mission statement (individual and group).
5. Complete a consensus process to develop a mission statement acceptable to group.
6. Revisions will occur through the planning stages.

7. Keep the mission statement front and centre to the planning process.

8. Mission statement is incorporated throughout the organization.

9. Formal adoption of mission statement (or review of existing one) marks important step in planning process.

See: J. Bryson & F. Alston. *Creating and Implementing Your Strategic Plan: A Workbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996, pp. 44-45.

Worksheets and process guidelines offer a ready-made guide for planning teams.

Step 4: Assess the Organization Internal and External Environments

SWOT Analysis Will:

- Clarify the conditions within which the organization operates
- Supply a systems view of the organization
- Look at all the factors, internal and external that affect the organization

Purpose:

- To test the environment against the organization's ability to accomplish its mission.
- **Identify internal strengths:**
  - List the resources of the organization (visible concrete examples)
  - List the capabilities of the organization (invisible but known, *i.e.*, leadership, skilled talented people)
- **Identify internal weaknesses:**
  - List the deficiencies in resources
  - List the deficiencies in capabilities

- **Identify external opportunities:**

  - List outside favorable, positive factors that can influence the organization.

- **Identify external threats**

  - List outside unfavorable, negative factors that can impact the organization.

Snowcard Technique

- Bring a single problem or issue into the group.
- Have individuals in the group brainstorm as many ideas as possible and record them on individual worksheets.
- Ask individuals to pick out their five "best items" and transcribe each one onto its own "snowcard" (post-it notes are great).
- Place on a viewing wall and arrange in categories for viewing.
- Establish sub-categories if needed.
- Have groups discuss and tinker with as needed.
- Remove and have all ideas typed and handed to the group.

(Bryson & Alstron, 1996, 112)

Strengths and weaknesses primarily focus on the NOW and are internal to the organization. Achieving clarity about the organizational strengths and weaknesses can identify its core competencies:

- Point out the organization's strongest abilities.
- Identify most effective actions and strategies that have been or are operative.
- Highlight the resource capacity of the organization.

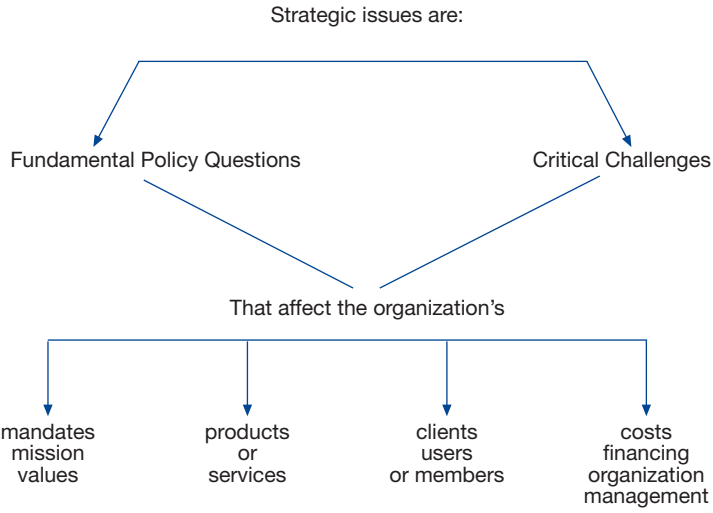
And in reviewing the flip side of the coin—that of the organization's weaknesses—the planning group can bring into greater clarity where:

- Training and skill development of staff could and should occur or
- Identify non-productive programs or services.

Opportunities and threats are often more future-oriented in scope and are often considered outside the "control" of the organization. Example: external funding sources dry up, large-scale plant closure in the community occurs causing local economic downturn.

In reviewing the opportunities and threats, the planning team would benefit from credible external feedback, perhaps from expert consultants, university officials, or the business community. "Critical friends," people who can provide a crisp, clear and objective assessment of the organization (outside the stakeholder perspective), can be a source of extremely valuable information. *(Bryson, 1995, 28-30)*

Step 5: Identify the Strategic Issues Facing the Organization



A statement of a strategic issue should contain three elements:

1. The issue is written as succinctly as possible.

   It should be framed as a question that the organization can do something positive about.

   Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonald's, launched his company to its pre-eminent market position by posing a simple but powerful strategic question—a "big question" to his colleagues:

   "How can we assure a consistent hamburger for people who are travelling on the road?" *(Senge, 1999, 510)*

2. List the factors that make the issue a fundamental challenge to the organization.

   What factors impinge upon the organization's mandates, mission, values, internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats?

3. Prepare a list of consequences if failure to address the issue occurs.

How does one determine if the issue is strategic or not? If no consequences ensue from the failure to address a particular issue, then it is not a strategic issue. The main tasks of this step will be to focus organizational attention on important strategic issues. These will be those that need immediate attention, monitoring, and incorporation into the regular strategic management of the organization. *(Bryson, 1995, 30-31)*

In *The Dance of Change*, Peter Senge has put together a wonderfully eclectic cookbook of resources. It is, in my opinion, a treasure-trove of timely ideas, worksheets, and models taken from a wide variety of writers. To support a group trying to figure out ways to ferret out their strategic thinking abilities a section in *The Dance of Change Workbook* entitled, "Asking Big Questions" is particularly useful.

To evoke strategic thinking a focus on discovering powerful questions is well worth the effort. Earlier in this section the process of describing activities to evoke strategic thinking is outlined. How do we know when we've asked the "big questions?"

A powerful question

- Is thought provoking
- Challenges assumptions
- Generates energy
- Focuses inquiry and reflection
- Touches a deeper meaning
- Evokes related questions

(Senge, 1999, 509)

The authors of "Asking the Big Questions" suggest that many organizations get fixated on short-term problem-solving without taking the necessary time to stand back and view the issues from a more essential and deeper level. This should lead planning groups into further analysis of core issues and help them get at root issues and causes. Again the writers encourage planning groups to recognize that this is a continuous, evolving process and harkens back to an earlier quote from Janice Stein that it is better to search for the hard questions than to accept the easy answers.

Step 6: Formulating Strategies and Developing Plans

This step drafts strategies and formulates the planning process. Bryson suggests that if the strategic planning process is relatively small scale and not unduly complex then this process would merge with Step 7.

He does advocate two processes to strategy development, one a more speedy process and the other, more complex. The simpler process is presented here.

The Five-Part Strategy Development Process

To resolve or address strategic issues the following steps can be taken.

- Identify practical alternatives (dreams, visions).
- Write options in action terms (do, buy, get, achieve).
- Enumerate barriers to achieving these options.
- Develop major proposals for either achieving alternatives or overcoming barriers.

- Identify actions to implement the major proposals.
- Prepare detailed work plan.

Step 7: Review and Adopt the Strategies and Plan

- Formal approval is sought to adopt and proceed with implementation of the plan.
- This allows buy-in from all stakeholders.
- It also makes a public commitment to action.

This step is the public and stakeholders' acceptance of the plan. If it has been an extensive process, a formal meeting presenting the approved plan would be a useful endeavor. A communications plan providing a map for the community on how the organization intends to implement the plan can be a pivotal and effective public relations tool.

Step 8: Establishing An Effective Organizational Vision

- Create a "Vision of Success"

This description tells the community what the organization will look like once it has implemented its strategies and achieved its full potential as it stated in the strategic plan.

Step 9: Implementation Process

Action plans should incorporate the following components:

- Defined roles and responsibilities of designated leaders, strategic planning committee, and individuals and groups involved in the process.
- Specific objectives, expected milestones, and results
- Specific action steps and relevant details
- Schedules
- Resource requirements

- A communication process
- An evaluation process (review, monitor, and make mid-course corrections)
- Accountability procedures.

Step 10: Reassess the Strategic Planning Process

Review • Revisit • Revise

Bryson indicates that this reassessment is important and it will be a conclusion to the strategic planning cycle and a prelude to a new strategic planning process.

The Strategy Change Cycle is iterative in practice. Participants typically rethink what they have done several times before they reach final decision. Moreover the process does not always begin at the beginning.

Bryson does say that "it does not matter where you start, you always end up back at your mission." *(Bryson, 1995, 37-38)*

Commentary

The Strategy Change Cycle

John M. Bryson's work on strategic planning has been written for use in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. He has written extensively on planning and his books and workbook have been popular resources and widely used in the area of strategic planning.

In the book *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations* (revised edition 1995), Bryson indicates that it was written for two main audiences; "the first…elected and appointed policy makers, managers and planners (in organizations) who are responsible for and want to learn more about strategic planning, and the second audience…of academics and students of strategic planning." *(Bryson, 1995, XI)*

Bryson effectively achieves these goals as the text is a detailed and well-researched work. The concluding sections of the text include a collection of five resources for more advanced applications of

strategic planning and an extensive bibliography that provides a wide range of resources on organizational development literature.

The Strategic Change Cycle outlined here is Bryson's preferred approach to planning. It is highly recommended that if groups chose to use Bryson's techniques that the supporting workbook co-authored by J. Bryson and Farnum K. Alston should be used as well. The workbook simplifies the more technical approach found in Bryson's main text and it provides an array of useful worksheets and group process guides.

The workbook is designed primarily to help those who are new to strategic planning guide themselves through the Strategy Change Cycle. The workbook is clearly not a substitute for the main text. *(Bryson, 1995, XIV)*

Bryson's approach to strategic planning is based on the premise that the planning is a "disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it. *(Bryson, 1995, X)* So it would seem that the Strategy Change Cycle format is more a highly rationalistic, disciplined, and controlled planning process. This rationalistic format uncovers, through the planning process, the best answer to the strategic questions. Actions then follow thinking in a logical step-by-step process.

According to the literature on organizational development, there has been considerable turmoil in the field of organizational development. Henry Mintzberg, professor of Management at McGill University, has written about "the rise and fall" of strategic planning. In his work he questions whether traditional methodology of strategic planning can effect substantive change. Mintzberg argues that planning is more an intuitive process rather than a rationalistic one and that strategy development is best understood in retrospect when we can see and analyze patterns in what has actually occurred. *(Van der Heijden, Kees, 1996).*

Mintzberg, Drucker, and Senge, among others have written extensively about the evolving nature of organizations and how they are managed. Whether the management model is hierarchical or a more egalitarian, participatory form, these authors contend that the organizational model does have implications on the methodology used in planning. They posit the theory that the more rationistic

paradigm of strategic planning does not seem to deliver the expected outcomes. Some of the reasons they believe point to a "bottle neck of thinking" at the senior executive level, thus cutting off the innovators and thinkers at all levels of the organization. Profound change initiatives within organizations can be fraught with challenges because by engaging a wider, more participatory group in the planning process, "it opens the door to a traditionally closed inner sanctum of top management." *(Senge, 1999, 488)*

The major evaluation, already mentioned, is a changing world view of organizations and how people can effectively work in them. Capra, Wheatley, Stein, and others have commented on the necessary transition that needs to occur in our collective mental mind-sets about our social institutions and their purposes in a civic society.

Anderson and Anderson Ackerman describe this as a change from the industrial mind-set which fueled the Industrial Revolution to the currently emerging paradigm that is a catalyst to many of the different ways we view organizations and change.

> Each of us lives and works in organizations designed from Newtonian images of the universe. We manage by separating things into parts, we believe that influence occurs as a direct result of force exerted from one person to another, we engage in complex planning for a world we expect to be predictable, and we search continually for better methods of objectively perceiving the world. These assumptions come to us from seventeenth-century physics, from Newtonian mechanics. They are the base from which we design and manage organizations, and from which we do research in all of the social sciences. Intentionally or not, we work from a world view that has been derived from the natural sciences.

> However, the science has changed. If we continue to draw from the sciences to create and manage organizations, to design research and to formulate hypotheses about organizational design, planning, economics, human nature, and change processes (the list can be much longer), than we need to at least ground our work in the science of our times. We need to stop seeking after the universe of the seventeenth century and begin to explore what has become known to us in the twentieth century. We need to expand our search for the principles of organization to include what is presently known about the universe. *(Wheatley, 1994, 6)*

The theorists writing on this changing paradigm point to the fact that so much emphasis on organizational theory has been on externals, "market share, profitability, and structure (external)" yet overlooked the impact of its culture, morale, and ethics (internal). *(Anderson & Anderson Ackerman, 2001, 112)*

Bryson's change model, though well-researched and supported by extensive examples and case studies has a high degree of technical aspects. The summary of this model included here is intended to capture the major elements of his preferred methodology—The Strategy Change Cycle.

If a board and senior staff chose to use this particular methodology a thorough reading of Bryson's book accompanied by the workbook is imperative. This model would also benefit from having an expert facilitator familiar with the theory and techniques developed by Bryson. This particular model of strategic planning is familiar to many and this familiarity with the process may be the major influence for deciding on The Strategy Change Cycle. However, consideration of the other methodologies in this paper and weighing their respective strengths is worthwhile.

Methodology 2: Applying Scenario Planning to Strategic Planning

Resources:

Schwartz, Peter: *The Art of the Long View*

Van der Heijden, Kees: Scenarios: *The Art of Strategic Conversation*

Senge, Peter: *The Dance of Change*

(Additional resources in bibliography)

Broadening the Long View: The Principles of Scenario Planning

> Scenarios are a tool for helping us take a long view in a world of great uncertainty. The name comes from the theatrical term "scenario" the script for a play or a film.
>
> Scenarios are stories about the way the world might turn out tomorrow, stories that can help us recognize and adapt to changing aspects of our present environment.
>
> Scenarios form a method for articulating the different pathways that might exist for you tomorrow, and finding your appropriate movements down each of those possible paths.
>
> Scenario planning is about making choices today with an understanding of how they might turn out. *(Schwartz, 1996, 4)*

"I should have seen that coming…or I should have thought about it." A common enough phrase heard when events occur that intuitively we sense we should have been prepared for.

Many professions practice some form of scenario planning as part of their normal preparations and training. Lifeguards, emergency measures workers, and firefighters are just a few who routinely create real-life action stories. These are simulated traumatic events to hone their skills and plan for should the real event occur.

Similarly a wide range of events and forces will always occur that create both challenges and opportunities for voluntary sector agencies. Government cutbacks, loss of core program funding, and changes in the economy that result in decreases in donor funding, are just some of the variety of daily issues facing boards and senior executive staff in agencies. Some of these are often known in advance; other events can occur when least expected. By taking time to reflect on present circumstances with an eye to the future, boards can often reduce the uncertainty by being more prepared for future eventualities.

Through the lens of scenario planning, realistic and plausible "potential futures" are constructed in a collective process. This strategic conversation and collective thinking of key people in the organization forces them to answer some "Big Questions" like: "What do we do if…" and then "What does this mean for what we do now?"

Thus, as Peter Schwarz says, a definition of a scenario is:

- A tool for ordering one's perception about alternative future environments in which one's decisions might be played out.
- A set of organized ways for us to dream effectively about our futures.
- A set of stories built around constructed "plots" that bring into greater relief significant elements that could impact upon your agency.

For those familiar with the concepts of a learning organization and the work of Peter Senge and others some of the underlying principles of scenario planning will be similar.

Learning Organization

The core principles of learning organization theory are based on five learning disciplines.

- Personal Mastery: an individual's capacity for growth and lifelong learning. In the learning organization theory, this concept extends to the collective capacity of people within the organization towards growth and lifelong learning. For most of us, the skills we initially brought to our jobs are not the skills we use today. Tremendous developments through

technology have changed all work environments. Through developments in the social sciences often many work environments operate in a participatory and engaged manner connected through networks. Technology has enhanced this capacity to connect even further. Knowledge, skills, and information are more easily shared today than ever before!

- Mental Modes: is described as the individual capacity to reflect upon, clarify, and improve our internal pictures of the world. Consequently changes within ourselves can prompt changes in our decisions, behaviors, and actions.

- Shared Vision: encouraging and promoting the participation and commitment of the group in pursuit of a collective vision for the organization.

- Team Learning: moving from individual mastery towards methods that support collective thinking skills in order to apply these skills to collective capabilities.

- Systems Thinking: a way of thinking about and a language for describing and understanding the forces and interrelationships that shape the organization. *(Senge, 1994, 6)*

Building on the learning organization theory, scenario planning is more an inductive process of planning. Using the techniques of scenario planning, a climate of collective inquiry, team learning, and systems and strategic thinking among all the members of the organization is created.

On personal mastery level, it is a natural and familiar process of creating stories and scenarios. Most are familiar with the kind of preparations one would do before a job interview. The process of rehearsing possible interview questions is a form of scenario creation. From an agency or systems perspective, it is a technique and a process to engage in strategic conversations in order to anticipate future changes and prepare collectively to deal with them.

In January, 2003, many of us watched in shock and sadness as the space shuttle Columbia hurtled towards earth in a fiery blaze. The lives of astronauts were tragically lost while their families watched helplessly.

In the aftermath of this tragic crash, NASA began to release information about the potential causes of the accident. Information was made public that some NASA engineers had done scenarios of potential outcomes of this particular shuttle trip. Some of the worse-case scenarios predicted the break-up of the shuttle and the deaths of the astronauts. Some media reports suggested because these engineers were not part of the chain of command, and the event they predicted were such worse-case scenarios, that no one paid them serious attention.

One could glean from this example the idea that scenarios can be useful planning tools but in order to be effective they require the engagement of the whole organization. However, to be effective it has to be what Schwartz calls this the art of strategic conversation. He says that this strategic conversation needs to permeate the whole organization in order to make any difference. Senge calls it systems thinking. Many organizational theorists, including Margaret Wheatley, contend that all organizations have the talent and the resources within to address strategic change and to learn continuously and apply this logic to their work. The shuttle crash is an extreme example, of course, and until the full investigation of the shuttle accident is made public, who knows the full chain of events that occurred on this flight?

The Process and Steps in Developing Scenarios

Key Points About Scenario Planning

- It is not a one-step process; it will involve an ongoing process called strategic conversation. It involves systems-wide thinking and change in the culture of the organization to occur.
- It is a social process and the more widely it is engaged, the more participatory it becomes.
- It is a unique process specific to your organization. It is not an off-the-shelf planning method.
- It involves adopting an articulated and explicit process, but it also captures the tacit and intuitive capacities of people within the organization.

The art of storytelling and writing is integral to develop useful, plausible scenarios. Though scenario planning cannot be a totally prescriptive activity, the process of writing a scenario has a recognizable pattern.

The following process is drawn primarily from Schwartz's book *The Art of the Long View* as his description of how to do scenario planning.

Step 1: Memories of the Future

Stories are a natural and readily available way we humans use to describe our realities. Storytelling is as old as humankind and is considered a powerful way to learn about ourselves and our world. Consider the parables used by great teachers. These profound stories contain common threads across cultures, ethnicity, and language and resonate deep within us. Constructing and telling stories can be considered one of the most ancient and available art forms drawing on our own imaginations and creativity.

The familiar story of the Good Samaritan, the one person among the many on the road that day, who was willing to stop and assist an injured person is an example of a powerful story. Not only did this Samaritan stop and provide immediate help to the wounded person; he went out of his way to ensure a long-term plan for the care and recovery of this unfortunate person. This parable teaches us across the centuries—causing us to reflect on our own circumstances and our behaviors towards others and how we can contribute to a civil society. Studies have shown that the human mind is constantly creating and telling itself stories about the next few seconds, hours, or weeks. Much of this is subconscious and automatic activity.

Some theorists in neurobiology have concluded that some people with brain impairment have difficulty in imaging their own micro-scenarios of the future. They are unable to perceive and make meaningful choices and actions.

The underlying theory of scenario planning is that we all have the ability to tell stories to engage our perceptions and imaginations but that we all have blind-spots, too. That, too often, we are unprepared to see the implications of near or immediate events.

Scenario development is a process that attempts to help us re-perceive the current realities to take a wider perspective, to be clearer about apparently unrelated developments, and to see beyond our current range of vision.

One of the most awesome moments of the events of September 11, 2001 was the execution of the terrorists' plan to use two of the most highly successful symbols of Western society—the aircraft and the modern skyscraper to cause such terrible destruction. With powerful intelligence capacities available, why were those whose responsibility it was "to see" so unprepared and blindsided?

"Men will not believe what does not fit in with their plans or suit their prearrangements. *(Schwartz, 1991, 33)*

Chains of Perception

Scenarios are not about predicting, but rather as has already been noted, are about perceiving futures in the present.

Scenarios are a way, based on the theatre, of suspending our disbelief. As an audience we sit and watch the story unfold and, if the play and actors are credible, we are fully engaged, mind and heart, in the tale unfolding before us.

This is an essential characteristic of a good scenario, it allows us to suspend our disbelief long enough to consider the implications of the scenario and appreciate the potential impacts upon our agency if this scenario comes to pass.

Pierre Wack wrote:

> Scenarios deal with two worlds. The world of facts and the world of perceptions. They explore for facts but they aim at perceptions inside the heads of decision makers.
>
> Their purpose is to gather and transform information of strategic significance into fresh perceptions.
>
> This transformation process is not trivial—more often than not it does not happen. When it works, it is a creative experience that generates a heartfelt "aha!" from your managers and leads to strategic insights beyond the mind's previous reach. *(Schwartz, 1991, 37)*

Myths as Aspects of Scenarios

Spinning myths is part of the process of writing scenarios. Storytelling in the form of myths can reveal deep truths and identify ways we feel and think about the future. Organizations have myths as part of the organizational culture. These are stories about the past and future.

Joseph Campbell has written extensively about myths, their power and meanings for humanity. Again, for scenario development using mythic figures as a symbol helps us to envision wider realities and continually learn.

Step II: "Begin From the Inside Out"

Choosing or uncovering the critical decisions to address in the organization is the next step in the scenario development process. Beginning from the inside out rather than the outside in forces one to begin with specific issues local to the organization. For every agency, decisions loom in the near or immediate future.

The response to these issues and the decisions made will shape the direction of the agency. What decision has to be made that will influence and have long-term influence on the organization? What hidden questions should be asked? Chose an issue that the board and decision-makers in the organization will be thinking hard about in the near future.

"In order to make effective decisions, one must articulate them to begin with." *(Schwartz, 1991, 49)* Some examples of the big questions may be like the following:

- Shall we build a substantive coalition with other agencies?
- Should we consider a merger with another organization in order to build capacity and improve our long-term stability?
- In this the time we begin a new service to address the changing demographics in the community?
- Should we initiate the major capital expansion currently on the drawing board?

Schwartz suggests that the kind of question that needs to be articulated is the one that keeps decision-makers awake at night! It

bears repeating that this stage in the process challenges our mindsets and mental modes as Schwartz calls them.

Often our mindsets tend to keep us from seeing the appropriate questions to ask about a decision. This means every scenario effort begins by looking inward. Schwartz calls this a form of internal research and he suggests that it is worthwhile to spend a hour or a day in reflective self-observation to discern our attitudes about the future.

Collectively an organization may chose to engage in more overt articulation and discussions of mental modes. This attention to the mindsets of key decision-makers in the organization and the willingness and honesty to discuss them with each other can be a powerful exercise. Focus on questions that continually challenge the organization's mindset especially among the key decision makers.

Step III: Research

Scenarios should focus both on the local (micro) environment and the global (macro) environment.

Once the critical issue or decision is determined then a listing of all the key factors that would potentially influence the success or failure of decision should occur. This part of the scenario process is the research phase involving both the individual and the group. It requires investigation, gathering information and material from a wide range of sources, and a willingness to continually readjust one's learnings and perceptions all along the process.

Schwartz lists a variety of areas and arenas to go hunting and gathering information. He suggests that scenario planners are like hunters and need to be sensitive and attuned to an ever-changing environment. The macro topics he suggests that one needs to be attentive to are:

- Science and technology
- Perception-shaping events
- Music and its cultural impacts and messages can provide useful information about societal changes.
- "Fringe-seeking," looking for new ideas and insights on the "edges" of society can provide fresh information.

- Innovators, futurists, and youth all can point to dramatic societal changes.

"People and organizations often organize knowledge concentrically, with the most cherished, vital beliefs at the protected centre."(Schwartz, 1991, 69) Ideas and innovators at the edges of society can be harbingers of future change. The research phase of scenario-building is all about looking and seeing by developing a wider, deeper awareness of local and global realities. Local and global resources can include community-university research centres, community foundations, and national voluntary sector organizations. An attitude and a willingness to break out of old patterns of behavior and routine and to explore widely is a useful characteristic for those involved in scenario development. Normal voluntary sectors business is about services and programs. But, in an economy where knowledge and information directly improve the bottom line/(or multiple bottom lines), personal relationships and networking become more important. Cultivating both like-minded people and critical friends to help see more widely will also be useful in the research phase of scenario planning. Networking through technology and other means can promote the sharing of knowledge and ideas and enrich all concerned. Knowledge is the only kind of wealth that multiplies when you give it away!

Step IV: Macro or Driving Forces: Thinking Out The Plot Lines

Every organization is propelled by key factors or driving forces. Some are from within the organization and include organizational goals and the make-up of staff. Other driving forces come from external sources such as government or political and economic changes.

Driving forces are the elements that move the plot of a scenario along. They determine the story outcome. Without incorporating plausible and realistic driving forces into the scenario there is no way to begin thinking through a scenario. They are a device honing your initial judgment and helping decide which factors will be significant or not.

Societal trends and external realities will always influence businesses and social institutions. The swift rise in the widespread use of computers and IT in most work and home environments is just

such an example. Fifteen years ago it would have been rare to see such an extensive and important use of technology in the voluntary sector. And though many voluntary sector organizations still lack the capacity to manage and use technology, there is no doubt it is a significant driving force in this sector.

Uncovering and identifying the driving forces influencing the organization is work best done in teams after initial research and the hunting and gathering of information is completed. More on describing the process of using scenarios as part of a strategic planning venture will come later.

Typical categories to uncover the driving forces that would influence the organization would be: society, economics, environment, technology, and politics.

In *Philanthropy Tomorrow*, a 2003 CCP planning document from which I have already quoted, 10 trends are identified that are unique and specific to the voluntary sector. These are very useful ideas that capture the factors and driving forces impacting upon the sector.

The trends are:

1. Core supporters are giving more; volunteers are giving less.
2. Donors demand accountability.
3. Donors want more involvement.
4. Canada's ethnic diversity is not being represented.
5. Lack of awareness about charities' finances is a growing barrier to donations.
6. The need for capital investment is increasing.
7. Charities fall behind in the use of technology.
8. The need for inter-sectoral collaboration is increasing.
9. Public trust in charities is under the microscope.
10. Charities are increasingly being held accountable in courts of law.

(Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2003)

It is important to note again, here, that scenarios, to be useful, must be tailored to and plausible for your unique situation. The CCP document posts some national trends that are credible and based on their expertise and research. They also provide clarification and definitions of key sector concepts in order that a common understanding is readily available to those using this planning tool.

Step V: Creating The Scenario Building Blocks

Schwartz comments that some scenario-planning theorists like Pierre Wack resist giving definitions to the subtleties of the scenario-writing process. Therefore, he suggests that it is more important to stay attentive to the process and not get caught up in defining certain building blocks. Besides identifying the driving forces, the next two aspects of developing the scenario plot line are what Schwartz calls pre-determined elements and critical uncertainties.

One of the most commonly recognized predetermined element is demographics. Statistics and population research, community and city growth or decline trends can point to issues that help focus on elements in various situations.

In *Philanthropy Tomorrow*, the authors describe Canada's ethnic diversity and its under-representation in Canada's voluntary sector. The demographic information about the growing population of Aboriginal youth and immigrant youth can be considered a predetermined element. This is the kind of information that needs to be introduced into scenario plot lines. Critical uncertainties are related to the predetermined elements. One cannot understand the patterns of youth volunteerism or engagement in the voluntary sector just by studying the demographic information. However, we can look ahead and develop two different plot lines in the scenarios—what is the potential impact of large numbers of youth engagement in the voluntary sector or, conversely, what are the implications for the sector if we fail to engage young Aboriginal Canadians and new immigrants to this country?

Driving forces, predetermined elements, and critical uncertainties give structure to our exploration of the future and shape our scenario plot lines.

Properly developed scenarios help make sense out of a large amount of data and information. Scenarios are structured with multiple

storylines. The *Philanthropy Tomorrow* document gives four excellent scenarios, or potential futures of the voluntary sector. These examples are multiple story lines to promote strategic thinking and conversation and learning within the organization. Multiple storylines are important in the scenario process, but experienced scenario planners indicate that no more than four should be developed or used in one process. Experience has taught them that more than four creates too much information and is planning overload. Three or four scenarios will suffice.

> The language of scenarios is about the future but they should make a difference in what is happening now. If it is successful in embedding different models of the local and global environments in the consciousness of the organization, it will make the organization more aware of environmental change. *(Kees Van Der Heijden, 1996, 118)*

Scenarios provide a new perspective

(Van Der Heijden, 1996, 119)

Finally, some additional considerations in creating scenarios from Schwartz include:

- Identify four scenarios so that you have multiple-scenarios; two with high probability and two as wild cards.
- Name each scenario with vivid and memorable descriptions. The *Philanthropy Tomorrow* document uses these four scenario names to describe in memorable terms the plot line of each:
  - All for One, One for All
  - Full Speed Ahead
  - Pull up the Drawbridge!
  - Winners Take All

The vivid names serve not only to capture the plot line, but if the scenario is truly effective and plausible the name of the scenario can have an effective description in organizational decision-making and becomes familiar to staff.

The section of the scenario development team should include:

- Support and participation from those who are responsible for governing and managing the organization
- A broad range of functions and disciplines
- Imaginative, open-minded people who are well able to work in a collective and team environment.

And the last word to Schwartz who says, "scenario planning is intensely participatory or it fails."

Scenarios for a Changing World: An Example of the Practice of Scenario Planning

The following real-life example of the practice of scenario planning demonstrates the use and effectiveness of this particular planning tool. This scenario plan is drawn from the experiences of Adam Kahane of the Generon Consulting Group when he was still working with Dutch Royal/Shell. In 1991 Shell was invited to send some of their scenario planners to South Africa. This was just a year after the release of Nelson Mandela from his long incarceration in prison. The conference was held in a centre near Cape Town called Mont Fleur. The purpose of the conference was to help South African leaders deal with the tumultuous period of transition from apartheid to full and equal integration and participation of blacks in South African society.

The Mont Fleur project brought together 22 academics, thinkers, trade unionist leaders, social activists, politicians, and ANC leaders. Their objective was to develop a set of alternative stories about South Africa's future in order to provoke debate and forward movement in the country.

Kahane takes a different perspective on scenario planning from Schwartz who focuses on developing plausible scenarios that will help business better adapt to what is occurring in their local and their

global environment. Kahane sees scenario thinking and planning as a tool for effecting societal change. The Mont Fleur project became the first arena where scenarios as a social planning tool were used. A description of the four scenarios developed by the planners with the 22 South African leaders provides a look at how the alternative stories provoked debate and forward movement. Kahane calls this process developing civic scenarios as a tool for making history.

Mont Fleur Scenarios

Lame Duck Scenario

Envisioned a prolonged transition with a constitutionally weakened government. The government purports to respond to all, but satisfies none; investors hold back; growth and development languish amidst a mood of long and slow uncertainty.

Icarus

Suggested that a black government could come to power on a wave of public support; embark on a huge, unsustainable public spending program; and as a consequence crash the economy.

Ostrich

This scenario pointed out the risk and futility of trying to prevent or avoid a negotiated settlement with the black majority.

Flight of the Flamingoes

This scenario outlined the broad parameters of a positive and successful transition.

The civic scenarios provided for a safe and creative forum that helped to bridge the challenges facing the leaders as South Africa emerged from the repressive regime of apartheid.

The scenario-building process helped to find common ground and language for diverse groups and pointed a way forward.

Kahane suggests, based on his experiences, that civic scenario processes produce four types of results:

1. Reframed Mental Modes

Using language similar to Schwartz and Senge, Kahane discusses the mental maps or models in our heads that tell us how the world works. Sometimes the maps are accurate and helpful and other times our mental maps are inadequate and inaccurate.

Scenario thinking helps to improve the quality of our models by articulating them, sharing them with others who have different perspectives and trying out alternative stories/scenarios in order to find common ground, solutions, or the way forward.

2. Broadened Network of Relationships

The people who have the power to act have to have some common ground and shared understanding upon which to base decisions and move forward. Scenario processes that are organized as open, constructive discussions have the power to contribute to a shared understanding, trust, and community building.

3. Regenerated Energy and Commitment

The Mont Fleur scenario process that came up with the positive Flight of Flamingoes had a strong impact. One of the members of the team was quoted saying "we were able to map out in broad terms the outline for a successful outcome. We captured the way forward of those of us committed to finding a way forward."

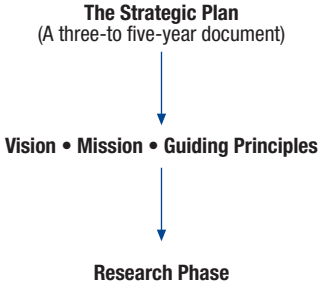
4. Renewed Action And Momentum

Change requires not only new thinking, relationships, and energy but actions.

Kahane suggests that the links between scenario processes and specific actions are difficult to establish; he does believe that Mont Fleur contributed to some of the choices made by some of South African political leaders.

Scenarios and Strategic Planning

In order to suitably integrate the practice and use of scenario planning into an overall strategic planning model the graph below outlines where scenarios could be of substantive help.



Scenario Building Exercise:

The scenario building exercise could be incorporated into this segment of the strategic planning process as scenario planning focuses on the strategic decisions that an agency needs to address. Strategic planning is intended to accomplish a set of clearly achievable goals. To be successfully implemented, the participation, input, and commitment from a wide range of people within the agency is critical.

The participatory nature of scenario planning can facilitate the engagement of a diverse representation from the whole organization. Scenario planning also draws heavily on acquiring information and research from a wide range of outside sources, critical thinkers, innovative ideas. The ability to draw on the organization's diversity, and innovative and creative people could ideally contribute to insightful, and hopefully powerful scenarios as planning tools.

In this graph the major steps in strategic planning are outlined. In the actual strategic planning process the vision, mission, and values of the organization are normally considered the essential elements and to be completed first.

Then an analysis of the internal and external environments is completed. Some facilitators will use a SWOT analysis to focus the planning group in identifying the strategic issues, strengths, and weaknesses in order to articulate their core goals which the organization wants to achieve.

Scenarios as a Planning Tool

To use scenarios as a stand-alone planning tool would also be an option. The following planning approach is taken from Adam Kahane's work on the Mont Fleur project. It is also a suitable planning strategy on its own and could be successfully implemented with small to mid-size agencies who do not want to take on a major strategic plan.

A Scenario Project Process (adapted from the Mont Fleur Civic Scenario Process)

Assemble three groups of people who will work together on the scenario-planning project and make up the scenario planning team. The steps in the process are as follows:

I. Board and Leadership Team

- Six to eight people from the board of directors and senior executive leadership of the organization.

- Their task will be to lead the project, provide the vision and authority to organize the whole team, schedule the process, and budget for any costs and expenses associated with the planning process including hiring (or assigning a staff member as) a facilitator or project coordinator.

II Scenario Round Table

- Gather a cross section of 20 to 25 key people who will do the actual scenario development process.

- Criteria for selection of this group would include choosing a variety of people from among innovative community thinkers, university researcher(s), social activists, key business, and/or political persons. The organization's stakeholders—staff, members, clients, past and current board members, and donors also should be included.

- As noted the more diverse the group of people engaged in the scenario development process, the more enriched the scenario input will be. The people selected should also have influence and the capacity to effect change.

- Willingness to hear the minority or divergent opinion can push the boundaries of peoples' mindsets and open up the process.

III. Project Coordinator or Facilitator

- Most planning initiatives need a facilitator or staff support person to assist the project. The criteria for hiring (or reassigning a staff member) should be incorporated in a job description of the role. The leadership team would have the responsibility to determine the parameters of this support role.

Phase One
Convening and Organizing

Who

Board members and senior executive leaders assemble a group of six to eight persons who have the wisdom, knowledge, and authority to guide and steer the scenario planning process. These are people passionate about and commited to the vision and values of the organization.

What their tasks will be:

- To articulate the vision and purpose of the scenario planning project.

- To determine the broad timelines, budget, and resources and identify key people who will be invited and selected to be part of the round table team.

- To hire or assign a facilitator or project coordinator to support the work of the process.

- To guarantee the integrity of the scenario-planning process.

Phase Two
Uncovering and Constructing

Who

This phase of planning falls principally to the scenario round table team and the project coordinator/facilitator. Depending on the vision and purpose of the scenario-planning process articulated by the leadership team this phase could last up to one or two years.

Factors that will influence the planning timeline will include: the size of the organization and the number of people involved in the process, the scope of the strategic goals that need to be addressed, and the resources available for the planning process.

- Two or three, one- to three-day planning retreats to be scheduled over the agreed-upon planning cycle.

- Ideally, the planning retreats are of more than one-day duration, at a centre where all the participants can be accommodated for work and overnight stays would be ideal. Many communities have retreat centres available for these types of workshops. Often they are former monasteries, or convents and are well-suited to accommodating and convening large groups of people at reasonable rates.

The core tasks of the round table group will be:

- To uncover current and emerging realities

- To share collectively the research and information gathered by all the participants and garner research information and input from key outside advisors or speakers

- To construct useful scenarios of possible and desired futures

- To engage in testing their understanding of the validity of the constructed scenarios and to continually seek out further information, knowledge, and research to stretch the boundaries of individual and group mental mindsets

- To create relevant, plausible, and clear scenarios useful and specific to the organization.

The following are four sample workshops tasks that the round tables complete, with the support of the project coordinator:

Workshop 1

- Team members get to know one another.

- Clarify the purpose and vision of the process.

- Identify subjects that need more information and knowledge.

- Sketch out preliminary driving forces.

- Team splits up into sub-groups with each group to go on a learning journey.*

** As scenario planning is built on the premise that we all have blind spots in our knowledge and perceptions, the intention of this task is to have the participants begin the research and information–gathering phase before the round table convenes for a second retreat session.*

The learning journey odyssey can be broken down to include:

Journey to	Remarkable Persons
	Remarkable Organizations
	Remarkable Places

Workshop 2

- Team members reconvene.

- Information sharing and research data is shared.

- Additional remarkable persons* are invited to this second intensive workshop.

**Listening to an exceptional person through a video/phone conference can also be a solution if expenses are too much.*

- Scenarios and vision are created.

Workshop 3

- Team reconvenes for a final workshop.
- The texts of the scenarios and vision are refined and agreed upon.
- A published text of the scenarios is prepared.
- An action plan to act on the scenario(s) is outlined.

Phase 3
A Catalyst for Action

All members of the process convene including leadership, round table, and project coordinator.

This phase uses the scenarios to initiate and be a catalyst for action plans for the organization. This could involve a variety of strategies for the organization.

Some suggestions:

- Include the scenarios as part of the overall strategic plan of the organization.
- Invite a gathering of interested civic and social leaders, or other community or voluntary sector agencies to a seminar and present the findings and excellent work of the organization for information, discussion, and feedback.
- Use the scenario(s) as part of the annual planning process within the organization.

The ultimate object of the scenario process is to engage widely and to think deeply about the preferred future for the organization. If successfully planned and implemented, scenario planning can be a powerful planning tool.

Commentary

Scenario planning is essentially about creating an organizational climate in order to cope with, adapt to, and thrive in a turbulent and complex world. As in all planning initiatives, it is about change. Many organizational change theories have been developed over the past 40 to 50 years to deal with and to manage change. Noticeably the "change is manageable" bubble began to burst in the mid-1980s and by the 1990s, it became glaringly obvious that truly managing change was becoming less and less possible. Leading change demanded the integration of numerous cross-functional initiatives and leaders' traditional project management techniques did not adequately provide for complex process integration. *(Ackerman, 2001, 25)*

Anderson and Ackerman contend that, for organizations to successfully engage in effective and transformative change ventures and to adapt their organizations to complex environments, change in the mindsets of leaders and managers needs to occur. As the scientific management principles based on deductive, logical methodologies did not seem to be delivering the outcomes hoped for, deeper, more transformative approaches were sought. New thinking about the culture of organizations and the people working in organizations has been emerging for the past 20 years. Scenario planning was most extensively practiced by planners in the early 1970s at Royal Dutch/Shell Company. It was developed as a planning strategy to address global events that might have impact upon the cost and production of oil. Initially it was seen as a way, to attempt, at least, to predict global trends and thus enable the company to adapt. But Pierre Wack, a leading thinker and planner at Royal Dutch/Shell pushed the concept further into the realm of challenging people at both the personal mastery and systems thinking levels. Wack suggested that in order to operate in an uncertain world, individuals and organizations needed to "reperceive" their ways (mental modes) of looking at things and to question their assumptions about the way the world works so that they could see more clearly. *(Schwartz, 1995, 9)*

In Capra's writing, as has been noted, he suggests that describing organizations through the use of metaphors can be helpful for leaders to understand how to lead organizations. The metaphor of organizations as brains can be applied to the learning organizational

theory and scenario planning. Organizations, made up of a collective of people, embody all the talents, skills, and learning of these people. It can be truly seen as a cognitive and living system.

> The knowledge on which this is based is embedded in the people in the organization but also in its systems and in its artifacts. Once living together, individual members affect each other's views through more or less intensive interactions. Through a process of selection and mutual influence the organizational culture is created. *(Kees Van Der Heijden, 1996, 114)*

Methodology 3: The Search Conference

Resources:

Anderson, Dean & Anderson Ackerman, Linda: *Beyond Change Management Advanced Strategies for Today's Transformational Leaders*

Emery, Merrelyn and Purser, Ronald E.: *The Search Conference: A Powerful Method for Planning Organizational Change and Community Action*

Senge, Peter: *The Dance of Change*

Wersbord, Marvin and Janoff, Sandra: *Future Search: An Action Guide to Finding Common Ground in Organizations and Communities*

Background of the Search Conference

> The ability to seek and create a more desirable future for our social organizations is a unique human capacity. We might even say that such ideal-seeking behavior is the lifeblood of healthy organizations, vital communities, and the good society. These ideals can become the group's conduit to the future. For when people can envision and imagine a more desirable future, present obstacles and past conditioning cease to bind them. The most telling advantage of the *Search Conference* method is the way it helps organizations and communities restore and strengthen their ability to create plans for the future that are consistent with the highest ideas of their members. *(Emery and Purser, 1996, 4)*

The Search Conference is a planning method that involves a group of people in a highly participative approach to planned change. The methodology engages the collective learning and creativity of the key people from the organization who are participating in the Search Conference. It inspires people to search for common ground on their strategic issues and develop new strategies and future directions from this approach. By building on the group's strengths and broad areas of agreement, the Search Conference methodology promotes a high degree of successful implementation and joint action planning.

The following excerpt describes the successful use of this method. On May 15-16, 1997, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), and the North-South Institute (NSI) convened a workshop of 35 leaders from the private sector, NGOs, research institutions, universities, and governments to discuss and recommend action on Connecting with the World, the November 1996 report of the IDRC task force.

To deal with the issues in the task force, the steering committee members opted to use the Search Conference technique as a means to plan.

> The Search Conference format was used. It is a technique that assists people from diverse backgrounds to grapple with complex issues where there is rapid change and where many conflicting influences must be taken into account in developing a plan of action.

Background materials were sent to all participants to provide information about Canada's role in relation to the emerging global knowledge networks.

During the Search Conference, in small groups and then in plenary sessions, participants first discussed the present situation and where it is likely to lead by the year 2010 if present trends continue. They then examined a desirable future for Canada in the same period, if Canada begins now to redesign its future along the lines recommended by the Strong Task Force. After reviewing constraints, the group examined ways to deal with them and defined significant opportunities which would become possible. Finally, a plan of action was developed for implementation by the three organizing bodies and other interested organizations. *(Canada and Global Knowledge Networks, www.iisd.org/pdf/2001/networks_search report.)*

Search Conference methodology is based upon the best practices of strategic planning, systems thinking, and effective group communications. Its primary methodology promotes democratic participation and builds sustained transformative learning. The methodology was designed to tap into the highest ideals, vision, and values of the organization or system in order to develop and implement a successful and useful action plan.

The Search Conference is an iterative process that builds on the knowledge base of the group and promotes a learning organization that is adaptive and flexible and continually open to new knowledge. Because of these characteristics, it promotes some of the best aspects of strategic planning, what Mintzberg and others describe as "strategic thinking." The major emphasis is on organizational skill development and the acquisition of new knowledge. Instead of analyzing and predicting, the people in the organization are more acutely aware of what's happening now and are becoming better, faster learners. *(Wheatley, 1999, 38)*

The group using the Search Conference method engages in strategic thinking and is more apt to seek out the hard questions than the easy answers as Janice Stein notes in her book *The Cult of Efficiency.* With this learning process, a cultural change in the organization is promoted. People begin "to own what they create" *(Wheatley, 1999, 68)* and become more thoroughly engaged in the life of the organization and its future direction.

These characteristics of the Search Conference methodology are aptly suited for use in voluntary sector agencies because its planning techniques taps into values, ideals, and vision of the organization.

Designers of the Search Conference

The original designers of this methodology were Fred and Merrelyn Emery and Eric Trish. They first developed it in the early 1960s as a planning process for the aerospace industry. It quickly gained widespread use throughout the 1970s and 1980s, at first primarily in Australia. The design methodology began to be used successfully with a wide and diverse range of community groups and business organizations. However, it wasn't until 1993 that formal training courses began to be offered in North America.

The main resource for this explanation of the Search Conference methodology is taken from the 1996 text by Merrelyn Emery and Ronald E. Purser entitled *The Search Conference, A Powerful Method for Planning Organizational Change and Community Action.* The authors identified several compelling reasons why they chose to write this text of their methodology.

> The field was in need of a systemic, conceptual understanding of the Search Conference methodology. Although Search Conference is a highly flexible planning tool, its application requires a secure grasp of the principles, theoretical framework, and behavioral science that undergrid the method. Therefore, we wanted to provide a sound theoretical framework for educating both aspiring and experienced Search Conference practitioners. *(Emery and Purser, 1996, XI)*

The designers go on to repeat the importance of understanding the principles and theory underlying this method. Failure to get a grasp of the theory will turn the Search Conference into a technique or fad. Because the method is based on positive communication building and democratic principles, they see its growing usefulness especially for the voluntary sector.

The authors emphasize that the Search Conference is not only suited as a strategic planning tool but it can be used as a community development approach to promote, encourage, and support social change. As has been argued all planning methodologies are built upon the principles and techniques that reflect the philosophy, world view, and intentions of those who initiate the planning process in the first place.

As previously discussed, two methodologies for planning, the Strategy Change Cycle, and Scenario planning were originally developed as models for use in the business and private sectors and then migrated to the public and voluntary sectors. The Search Conference has emerged prominently as a community development tool.

Theory and Methodology

Three key theoretical underpinnings of Search Conference methodology enhance its suitability and usefulness as a tool for community development and social change. They are: a) learning toward the future, b) restoring civic responsibility, and c) a method for planning and learning.

A) Learning Toward the Future

The process is designed in "human terms" to help participants learn about their organization in its environment, and see how they have created their system and the world they live in today. It also focuses

on the organization's unique history, contribution, and culture and helps participants reserve the best of the organization as they move forward into the future.

People learn to deal with disagreements while respecting differences through the process of finding common ground. People learn to move ahead as a unified community accepting joint and shared responsibility for planning and action.

Participants in the Search Conference do not sit passively back and listen to "talking heads" extol the next best planning fad. Search Conference is intended to be an active, engaged, and involved process of diverse people with a variety of skills, learning styles, and ability.

B) Restoring Civic Responsibility

Fritjof Capra has already been quoted earlier on the disassociation he observed among business executives as they attempted to deal with the complex environments in which their companies operate while constantly initiating change initiatives. The resulting corporate downsizing and transnational mergers have left many people with the feeling that they are dispensable and just so much flotsam and jetsam in the whole scheme of organizational change.

Citizen and voter participation in western society elections has been recorded in a steady downward decline. Many, especially youth, have felt disengaged and disassociated with the usual tools of the democratic process. "Unhappy, disenchanted people will neither have the energy or the will to change their communities and organizations. Many people believe that it is no longer possible for them to make a difference. Healthy organizations and communities require that this withdrawal from civic life be halted and replaced by responsible involvement if we are to reverse the cultural slide into passivity and cynicism." *(Emery and Purser, 1996, 7)*

Trends identified in the Canadian voluntary sector show a decline in volunteer participation, "the few are doing more." These trends should encourage us to try to utilize planning tools that help to reinvigorate people's interests and participation in our social institutions.

Search Conference promotes new ways of learning and planning that are based on the model's accessible methods, helping people to mobilize, to act purposefully on behalf of the common good.

If some people read the above comments with a questioning eye, an observation recently made by John Raulston Saul is worth keeping in mind. In a public lecture in Saskatoon on March 18, 2003, Saul noted that often people can and do operate out of their deepest values. "Enough time has passed since the tragic events of September 11, 2001 for a host of dark stories about human self-centeredness and cruel self-interest to emerge. That few such stories have emerged is noteworthy. On that blue September morning well over 35,000 ordinary human beings, beginning their usual workday were about to face a defining existential moment. We are now more than familiar with the hundreds of stories of genuine human kindness, compassion, and courage that filled the day."

The point made by Raulston Saul that defined September 11, 2001 is that so many acted out of their deepest and most admired human and humane core. Almost 30,000 people bravely and, often together in groups, acted to save themselves and many others around them *(comments adapted from the lecture)*. The stories of genuine human compassion and hospitality accorded to the thousands of people on stranded planes in Newfoundland and maritime Canada also confirms that many do act out of their best selves.

The Search Conference provides the collaborative and creative opportunity where people can be relied upon to make the purposeful change and that people can work together to create more positive futures.

C) A Method for Planning and Learning

The Search Conference process builds on the best practices of strategic planning, open systems theory and effective communications skills.

The Search Conference has the participants search trends and possibilities in the broader environment surrounding them, work towards finding a common ground, and develop realistic and creative strategic plans with an agreement to be responsible for the implementation of the joint action plans. The method teaches people that successful citizen engagement is possible.

Core Concepts

Certain core concepts are integral underpinnings to the theoretical base of the Search Conference. A brief description of these core concepts with recommendations for additional readings is included below.

Open System Theory is an organic approach to thinking about organizations and social institutions. Taken from the language of science, an Open System is permeable, importing knowledge, and information and continually engaged in self-renewal. It is a sustaining living system with the ability to change and learn and draws on learning organizational theory.

A useful example of an Open System is to think of choir, a wonderful mixture of a diverse range of human voices with all their respective skills, tones, abilities, and ranges that come together as one. The choir represents an open system. People learn from each other, listen to each other, and build on their individual and collective practice to create something larger and more varied than the individual parts.

The foundational principles for the Search Conference is comparable. As a successful planning tool, individuals can join together pooling their expertise, commitment, and energy to create their preferred future outcomes. Like the choir, whose collective voice captures the sum of all the individuals, so a Search Conference follows the same principle. The methodology does not rely on external expertise but does draw on external information and knowledge—an essential characteristic of the Open System theory.

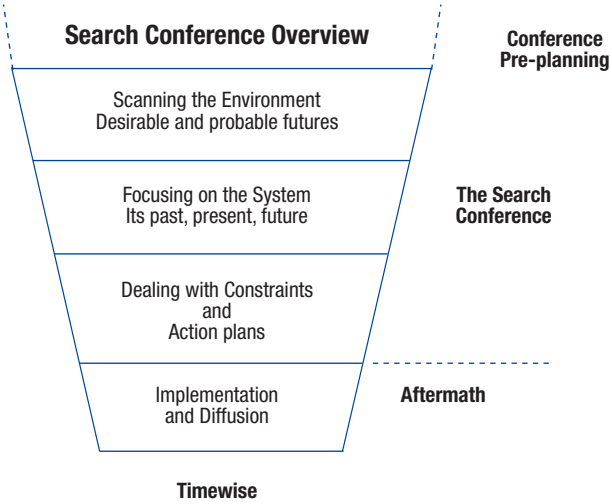
Common Ground

The Search Conference methodology seeks to build an environment that draws on people's strengths, common purpose, and ideals about a shared, desirable future.

> By creating the conditions under which commonalities take precedence and human diversity is appreciated; conditions are conducive to sharing responsibility. *(Emery and Purser, 1996, 17)*

The authors provide case studies and examples where the Search Conference has been successfully implemented. They indicate that,

even in circumstances where glaring social issues have been challenges to successful communication, the Search Conference provides a sanctuary within which people can practice different ways of planning and learning together, behaviors they can continue long after the conference closes. *(Emery and Purser, 1996, 17)*



1/3 of the conference:	Focus on learning about changes and trends in the environment
1/3 of the conference:	Look at the system, its past history, its present strengths and weaknesses, and its most desirable future
1/3 of the conference:	Identifies future visions that are reality tested against constraints and action planning groups organize how to implement the strategic goals. *(Emery and Purser, 1996, 13)*

Building Blocks of the Process

The author-designers of the methodology suggest that there is no single, all-encompassing Search Conference design that can be applied to all situations. Using the underlying principles, those

organizing the Search Conference will design the best basic plan suited to their circumstance. *(Emery and Purser, 1996, 174)*

The classic Search Conference should always include these aspects that allow participants to:

- Learn about changes in the external environment.
- Search for the desirable future for the world and discover common ideals, at the same time becoming mindful of the probable future.
- Gain a shared appreciation of the history of their own system.
- Critically analyze the functioning of their system.
- Search for the most desirable future for their system, which includes the development of strategic goals that are achievable, taking into account likely constraints.
- Develop precise and concrete action plans that can be implemented in ways that are consistent with the ideals and purposes outlined earlier in the conference. *(Emery and Purser, 1996, 174)*

The following outlines the basic building blocks of the Search Conference. This example is provided in order that those considering this a strategic planning technique can judge the suitability of the process for their organization.

Overview of the Search Conference Method

Environmental Appreciation

Phase One (Part I) Task:	To identify changes in the world.
Phase One (Part II) Task:	Identify desirable and probable futures of the world 10 years out.

System Analysis
Past, Present, and Future

Phase Two (Part 1) Task: History session. Review and survey the origins of the organization, its history, significant events, and milestones.

Phase Two (Part II) Task: Present: present system analysis—strengths, weaknesses, what to keep, drop, create.

Phase Two (Part III) Task: Future: what is the desirable future for our system.

Action Planning
Integration of System and Environment

Phase Three (Part I) Task: Identify constraints to achievable and desirable future and strategies to get around them.

Phase Three (Part II) Task: Develop action plans.

Environmental Appreciation

Phase One (Part 1)

Task

Identify changes in the world that have occurred in the last five to seven years that are significant or novel.

The focus on this initial segment is to have participants identify the broader context and the changing trends that have been occurring. This section is an environmental scan and helps to provide the participants with a wider perspective. The purpose of this environment scan is to focus the planning endeavor from a proactive rather than a reactive approach.

This segment is based upon Open Systems Theory that the author-designers draw upon in their Search Conference methodology. This theory establishes that an organization (or system) exists and

functions in the context of a larger environment. By identifying trends, and uncertainty, and interdependencies, participants are required to look at their realities from a much broader context.

Time and Group Configuration:

45 to 60 minutes in large group plenary session.

Outcome:

> Substantial data is gathered from among the expertise and experience of the key participants. A shared context begins to emerge. As well, the beginning of effective communications occurs if four conditions are present: 1) openness (things are what they appear to be); 2) a shared field (the people present can see they all live in the same world); 3) psychological similarity (among the participants); 4) and mutual trust. *(Emery and Purser, 1996, 134)*

A small group exercise, following this initial plenary session, is suggested if there is time. Small groups work to identify and analyze the most significant trends in the data. This includes examining emerging ideas that may point to signs of potential change or as the authors call them "social embryos of change."

Phase One (Part 2)

Task

Identify desirable and probable futures of the world 10 years out.

This second part of the environmental appreciation phase has the participants search out desirable and probable futures for the world. Scenarios are designed and written in a small group session. The scenarios portray the most desirable futures for the world and those that are most probable that will likely extend into the future.

Time and Group Configuration:

Small:

a) 45 minutes in small groups. If 35 to 36 participants are involved, six small groups would be suitable.

Large:

b) 1 hour and 15 minutes for each group to report their scenarios to the large group. Discussion questions and comments occur in this part.

Outcome:

The beginning of shared ideals and group team building can occur.

If the Search Conference is for corporate or industry group, another segment of the Environmental Appreciation phase may be useful. The task here would be to scan and identify trends in the business or corporate sector environment that the system needs to be aware of and incorporate into their planning.

System Analysis
Past, Present, and Future

Phase Two (Part 1): History Session

Task

Review and survey the origins of the organization, its history, significant events, and milestones.

The authors suggest that the history phase be designed as most suitable to the group. It could be as simple as a large group discussion remembering all the significant events, crises, and successes of the organization. Or it may be a variation on this with input from all the participants. However the team designs this segment "it restores the oral tradition, where people shared their common history, celebrated their customs and rituals, and paid homage to all who went before." *(Emery and Purser, 1996, 183)*

The history segment provides the participants the opportunity to explore the events that have shaped the culture of the organization and identifies the continuities that need to be threaded from the past to the future.

Outcome:

The strategic plan must reflect this cultural heritage of the system.

Time and Group:

Configuration: large group, 1 to 3 hours

Phase Two (Part Two): Present

Task

Present system analysis—strengths, weaknesses, what to keep, drop, create.

Three flip charts with the headings: Keep, Discard/Drop, Create are placed at the front of the plenary session. In a brainstorming session, participants spend anywhere from 45 minutes to a couple of hours listing and identifying what needs to be kept and carried into the future, what needs to be done away with, and ideas about things that need to be created.

This is intended to be a broad look a the current system and its functioning.

Time and Group Configuration:

2 hours in large group session.

Outcome:

A forthright and honest examination of the system. A high degree of trust needs to be operative and apparent to all the participants.

Phase Two (Part 3): Future

Task

What is the desirable future for our system in *(the appropriate time frame) (5 to 10 years maximum)*

Participants work in small groups of five to six on the same task. They are to describe a desirable future for the system. This process should yield four to seven key points or strategic goals, long-term targets for their system.

If at the end of the small group work, the group has more goals than can be reasonably manage they may choose to prioritize their

strategic goals. Some goals might have such strong interrelationships that they could be reasonably integrated in a larger one.

Action Planning
Integration of System and Environment

Phase Three (Part 1)

Task

Identify constraints to achievable desirable future and strategies to get around them.

The participants now convene in their small groups. They may choose to form in the same small groups that developed the strategic goals. One option, then, for the respective small groups is to answer the following question for each strategic goal:

Identify the most serious obstacle(s) for realizing these goals and identify ways of dealing with each of them.

Time and Group Configuration:

1 to 2 hours, small group tasks

Outcome:

Identified strategies for overcoming restraints.

Phase Three (Part 2)

Task

- Develop action plans:
- Project milestones
- Commitments (who, when, what)
- Progress review checkpoints

This is a more time-consuming process and again suitably done in the small groups.

Participants can normally self-select around strategic goals that involve their interest and expertise. Also, participants are committed to the process of implementation of these particular goals.

Time and Group Configuration:

Four to eight hours of small group work followed by a plenary session where all the strategic goals and action plans are presented to the gathering.

Outcome:

Clear precise, action plans with participants agreeing to commit to the implementation of their particular goals.

One reporting mechanism that the authors suggest is useful to build into the process is a three-three-three framework. Action planning groups specify the tasks they will accomplish in three weeks, three months, three years.

Follow-Up and Conclusion

The follow-up session to the Search Conference gathers all the participants together to determine what to do with all the data generated in the process. Some groups publish a report on their process and their action plans as a written record and commitment to action.

The Search Conference conveners work with the various action planning teams to agree upon on-going follow-up and to determine if and when another plenary session will be held. The important outcome of the Search Conference is that action planning teams should be self-directed and self-managed.

Sample Schedule

A usual time frame to be allotted for a Search Conference would be over three days. A sample time frame could look as follows:

Day 1 Evening session (6:30 to 9:30 p.m.)

Day 2 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Day 3 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

This should provide sufficient time to accomplish the tasks of the Search Conference. This two-and-a-half day format should really be held off-site from the organization. Choose a centre where people

can be comfortably accommodated for two nights and an environment where they are able to work well together. Many communities have such facilities that can be used at a reasonable cost.

Though the Search Conference is designed to be a highly participatory process that uses the tools of effective communications and open systems theory to ground the process, the authors contend that the Search Conference can be most successfully initiated and implemented if certain conditions are present. A skilled person who will act as the Search Conference Manager is certainly important. Someone(s) must have the responsibility, authority, and skills to initiate and convene the Search Conference. The qualities and expertise of the Search Conference manager should include:

- A person who understands the role as that of a collaborator and community organizer.
- A person who understands that the expertise required is limited to the design and management of the conference helping to run the meeting smoothly.
- A person who helps to maintain a non-threatening environment where all the participants can share and build on their collective knowledge.
- A person who has a sound grasp of the theory* and design of the Search Conference.

**These details are explained in a more thorough way in the recommended text as indicated. If you choose to use this method, a thorough reading of one of the recommended resources is advisable.*

> For Eric Trist, new directions of hope are to be found not in centres where power, resources, and wealth have traditionally been concentrated, but on the periphery, in bottom-up change, in the middle space between single organizations and the nation, and across voluntary organizations. *(Emery and Purser, 1996, 277)*

While authority at the top of the organization must sanction the Search Conference, it is essentially a grass-roots approach to planned change. The Search Conference manager's role is not intended to be as an expert advisor but simply to assist the whole group execute a productive and effective conference.

Commentary:

In the book *Future Search An Action Guide to Finding Common Ground in Organizations and Communities*, the authors Wersbord and Janoff adapt and build on the principles of Search Conference.

This particular book is extremely user-friendly and contains a good collection of resources to conduct a conference. The appendix sections outline all the necessary elements, some of which include: logistics, conference sites, room set-ups, materials, and a sampling of worksheets and handouts of useful information for participants in a conference.

Future Search contains principles and a planning world view similar to the Search Conference. The difference in terminology is less a difference in style and intent. Different authors and practitioners in the field seem to be writing more "variations on a theme" rather than substantive differences in methodology.

The *Future Search Action Guide* presents the following short overview of their process:

Conditions for success:

- "whole system" in the room
- global context, local action
- common ground and future focus, not problems and conflicts
- self-managed small groups
- full attendance
- healthy meeting conditions
- three-day event (*i.e.*, sleep twice)
- public responsibility for follow up *(Weisbord and Janoff, 2000, 5)*

The Search Conference and Future Search methodology are evolving and organic processes. This style of planning exemplifies the kinds of innovative and experimental methods that Margaret

Wheatley calls for in order that our social institutions are healthy and purposeful organizations.

Search Conferences bring the talents and expertise of the whole group together. Because of these participatory and democratic principles, this model can be a powerful tool for social change. If board and staff determine that this methodology is worth investigating further, the *Future Search, An Action Guide* is a readily accessible text. It is laid out in a text and workbook format and is an easy-to-read guide.

The Emery and Purser text contains some excellent case studies where the Search Conference techniques have been successfully used. Both these books, along with other resources contained in the bibliography are good supplemental reading.

Methodology 4: The Appreciative Inquiry Summit (AI)

Resources:

Cooperrider, David L. and Whitney, Diana: *The Appreciative Inquiry Summit: An Emerging Methodology for Whole System Positive Change*

The Centre for Development and Population Activities, 1999, Training Manual Series (Vol. X): *Strategic Planning: An Inquiry Approach*

Hammond, S. (1996): *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*

Appreciative Inquiry: What is it?

> Ap-pré ci-ate, v., 1., valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or in the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems. 2. to increase in value *e.g.,* the economy has increased in value. Synonyms: valuing, prizing, esteeming, and honouring.
>
> In-quiré, v., 1. the act of exploration and discovery. 2. To ask questions; to be open and seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: discovery, search, and systematic exploration, study. (AI Commons Website)

The AI Commons *(Appreciative Inquiry.cwdc.edu)* is a comprehensive portal that contains a wide cross-section of tools and research information for planning teams. This website is sponsored by the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. If planning teams are considering using the AI Summit methodology, checking the AI Commons portal would be a good first place to start their planning research.

The Appreciative Inquiry Summit, though still in the early stage of development, is being widely used by business, government, and voluntary sector groups. Sometimes AI Summit is used as a "stand-alone" planning methodology or is incorporated with other strategic planning techniques.

In the recent Canadian Centre of Philanthropy document *Philanthropy Tomorrow*, the authors incorporated principles and methodology from the AI Summit design along with Scenario Planning techniques to create a very useful research and planning document.

Another example of an applied use of the AI Summit methodology was in 1999 when the Centre for Development and Population Activities put together a training manual called *Strategic Planning: An Inquiry Approach*. This particular manual is part of the CEPPA's workbook series and was written specifically to offer NGOs and their affiliates a good planning guide. The objective of the authors of this workbook is to make strategic planning accessible, meaningful, and enjoyable. It is specifically targeted for grassroots groups who may not have had wide training in organizational development and management. It is intended to encourage these groups to develop and enhance their skills and give them well-researched planning methods. The idea of marrying aspects of both strategic planning approaches (the problem solving approach and the AI approach) emerged in conversations with CEPPA staff. It was agreed that the language employed by AI would be more suitable, acceptable, and meaningful for NGO audiences. As well, the principles of a productive and cooperative planning approach as the AI method is, would have broad appeal to grassroots groups. *(www.cedpa.org)*

This CEPDA document in and of itself is a useful planning workbook. If boards and senior staff are interested in adopting the AI Summit methodology combined with the traditional strategic planning approach, this workbook would be an excellent resource. (See "Bibliography and Resources" for further information.)

This manual contains a six-part process to complete a strategic plan.

One: Organizing the Strategic Planning Process

Two: Discovery—An Organizational Inquiry

Three: Discovery—An Environment and Resource Inquiry

Four: Dream—Propositions for the Future

Five: Vision and Mission Statements

Six: Design—The Action Plan

AI Summit: What Is It?

Another approach to initiate an AI Summit is adapted from the writings of one of the major designers of the AI approach, David Cooperrider.

The author designer of the AI Summit, David Cooperrider contends that the AI methodology is still an evolving process. The current AI theory and design is a result of the collective practice and learnings of many people.

As the original designer, David Cooperrider "resisted creating a manual for Appreciative Inquiry because he worried it would turn into another technique or fad of the month." *(Hammond, 1998, 4)*

However, others are beginning to produce manuals on AI. Whitney and Troslen-Bloom recently published *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry.* This book was reviewed in the *Globe and Mail* business section by Harvey Schachter who described AI in these words, "…a new change management technique called appreciative inquiry argues that you should focus on the positive…." *(Globe and Mail, April 24, 2003)*. This is not intended to criticize Whitney and Troslen-Bloom for creating a manual, but to underscore the reality that many people do look for tools and techniques to resolve complex organizational issues.

Sue Annis Hammond in *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry* has pulled together a description of the philosophy behind AI Summit. Her book has been written for "those who want to find out what it is about before they invest the time to really learn it!" *(Hammond, 1998, 5)*

This section will draw on the writings of both Cooperrider and Hammond to accomplish the objective of providing the reader with sufficient information about the AI Summit to determine whether they indeed want to learn more about this new process. Further resources are suggested for the planning team to develop an overview of how to conduct an AI Summit. This section will discuss the principal concepts of an AI Summit.

AI Summit: Principles and Theory

Problem Solving Approach	Appreciative Inquiry Approach
"Felt Need" Identification of Problem	Appreciating and Valuing "The Best of What Is"
Analysis of Causes	Envisioning "What Might Be"
Analysis of Possible Solutions	Dialoguing "What Should Be"
Action Planning (Treatment)	Innovating "What Will Be"
Basic Assumption	**Basic Assumption**
An organization is a problem to be solved.	An organization is a mystery to be embraced.

(Hammond, S., 1998, 24)

The above schematic captures the essential difference between a traditional model of strategic planning and the AI Summit process. The key question asked throughout the traditional method of strategic planning is "what problems are you having?" Whereas the key question asked throughout the Appreciative Inquiry process is, "What is working here?"

The underlying theory of AI is that as social beings, we construct reality in our organizations and in our communities based on (a) what we talk about, (b) what we envision together, and (c) what we study or focus on. We bring forward more of whatever it is we pay attention to. AI is constructed so that we begin to pay more attention to what is life-giving rather than life-destroying *(AI Commons)*.

AI Summit is a method that seeks to bring about the whole system positive change. *(AI Commons)*

According to Cooperrider the experience of getting the whole system into one room and the process design of the AI Summit does much to bring out the best in people, teams, and organizations. Feedback from people who have gone through an AI Summit is extremely positive and encouraging.

Lessons From the Field: Applying Appreciative Inquiry is a collection of case studies from AI practitioners who have used the

process and seen the benefits of its use. The comments of those who have gone through an AI Summit accentuate the positive aspect of AI:

- It evokes trust—everyone is there together.
- It allows people to see "the whole system" and a purpose greater than their own or their specific department.
- People's natural stores of goodness are tapped into—people feel a sense of belonging.
- It establishes credibility in outcomes; people feel part of the decision-making process and are more willing to commit to the action stages.
- New group norms are formed; there is movement from "I" to "We."

The AI Summit is like an "ecological reality; all the pieces of the puzzle come together in one place and people get an appreciation for the whole." *(AI Commons)*

AI Summit: Conditions for Success

Make AI your own! Cooperrider and others underscore the fact that each and every AI Summit is uniquely your own process. It is not intended to be simply a "change management technique." "Through a workshop format, the participants stir up memories of energizing moments of success creating a new energy that is positive and synergistic." *(Cooperrider, AI Commons Website)*

Who Participates?

The participant list for an AI Summit includes all stakeholders in the organization: staff, board, volunteers, members, clients, community partners, donors, funders, union representatives, suppliers, and so on. The importance of having a diverse and representative involvement of the whole system cannot be overstated.

"To consider who is a stakeholder do the "Five I's" checklist"

- Everyone who is Interested
- Everyone who has Influence
- Everyone who has Information or access to it
- Everyone who may be Impacted, and
- Everyone who has an Investment

(Cooperrider, AI Commons Website)

Principles for Large Scale Meetings

Though the designers contend that each AI Summit is unique, there are also broad general principles for hosting large scale meetings that are relevant and applicable.

- A clear task
- Whole system in the room
- Spacious and gracious setting
- All voices valued and all data public
- Facilitation that is supportive and empowering
- Full attendance over entire session
- Good design flow of the meeting

(Cooperrider, AI Commons)

Principles of How to Do an AI Summit

An AI Summit design flows through FOUR main segments. Depending upon the size of the organization and the number of participants, each segment may take from two to three hours (at the very minimum) to a full day to complete.

Some large companies engage in an organizational wide AI Summit closed their businesses for a full four-day process. It is important to remember that each AI situation is unique. The AI Summit is

designed to suit the uniqueness and needs of each organization rather than fitting the organization into some artificial and prescriptive technique.

The Four D Process: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny

Day 1: Discovery

Setting the Task Focus

All AI Summits should be organized around a clear and central task. Cooperrider says that it is "essential that the task be clear, simply articulated, and adhered to at the time of the Summit." He suggests that the task of the Summit should be clearly stated in the *Title of the Meeting*.

Some of the following examples he gives provide a clear explanation of his point. These are taken from AI Summits that he led:

- A Time of Action: Discovering the Steps for a United Religions Charter
- Focus 2000: A Working Session to Create Our Future
- Partnership: Creating the Principles and Practices That Align Our Strengths
- From Vision to Strategy: Planning for 2005.

He goes on to explain: In organizations where we have worked for several years, the task for each year's successive summit changes to meet the evolving needs of the organization. At Nutrimental three annual summits focused on visioning, strategic planning, and process improvement. At Hunter Douglas summits have been used for culture change, strategic visioning, and strategic planning. And with the United Religions Initiative annual summits have taken the organization from: Discovering the Steps; to Visioning; to Drafting the Purpose and Principles; to Living with the Organization Design; to now in 2000, Charter Signing. Each year and each

successive summit, serves as a forum for inquiry and dialogue into the organization's most emergent task. *(Cooperrider, AI Commons)*

Create the question(s) your organization wants to uncover and explore in this discovery process. Remember the focus is on what has worked well in the organization. The core principle here is if we did it before we can build on our past experiences and strengths and learn the many facets of the organization's "positive change core". *(Cooperrider, Al Commons)*

"What works well in our organization?"

One of the assumptions of this exercise is "that planning is not about *solving problems* but more about *embracing solutions*. The focus is on the things that have been successful. The outcome of this activity will be statements—Propositions for the Future—that describe where the organization wants to be in the future based on their experiences of the past." *(CEDPA document)*

Sample Sets of Inquiry Questions

- Describe a time when you feel the organization performed really well. What were the circumstances during that time?
- Describe a time when you were proud to be a member of the organization. Why were you proud?
- What do you value most about being a member of this group? Why?

(Hammond, 1998, 34)

- Who are we individually and collectively?
- What resources do we bring?
- What are our core competencies?
- What are the most hopeful macro trends impacting our organization at this time?
- What ways can we imagine going forward together as an organization?

(Cooperrider, AI Commons)

- What do you value about yourself? Your work?
- What attracted you to this organization?
- What are the energizing factors you feel give life and meaning to your organization?
- What are your organization's best practices? (The things it does well.)
- If you had three wishes to transform your organization, what would they be in order of priority?

(CEDPA Document)

Again, these are only samples to guide you. Planning groups should choose what works best for your organization. Developing your own clear and powerful questions will provide an effective map for the AI Summit.

Appreciative Inquiry Interviews

All participants in the AI Summit are involved in this group inquiry phase. All participants are grouped into one-on-one pairs. For 60 to 90 minutes, both people interview each other and record their findings in short notes.

The inquiry interview is organized around the central task of the meeting. The best questions invite discussion about the past successes of the organization. Participants have the chance, in a mutual experience, to share and listen to stories, ideas, values, and deepest concerns about their work and place within the organization.

Cooperrider calls this initial phase of an AI Summit a "Holographic Beginning," allowing everyone to express their ideas and share their hopes for the future early on in the meeting.

Effective interview protocol encourages everyone to keep to the task at hand, listen closely to the other, encourage the sharing of stories, successes, enthusiasm, and positive energy. The focus of AI is to search out the positive.

Whole System In The Room

When the designers of AI say that this inquiry phase gets the "whole system in the room," they suggest that this may mean (1) all stakeholders are actually present together or (2) the "whole story" is in the room.

Some larger or more complex organizations may conduct the inquiry interviews throughout the organization prior to the AI Summit. The findings of all these interviews are then brought forward to the Summit. However the Inquiry/Interview phase is conducted, it is important to include the ideas, wishes, and dreams of all stakeholders.

The participants focus on "who are we at our best," as they recollect stories and best practices through the interview process. All this information is gathered together in a large, plenary group session.

Positive Core Map

The primary activity of this large group session is to collect all the information from the interviews and begin to distill it into major themes, emerging issues, or energizing forces. Four or five major themes are produced that illustrate the best practices of the organization.

Sample Themes

- Partnerships
- Diversity
- Innovation
- Customer Service
- Leadership
- Quality Programs

Climate Building

Organization change efforts often focus on the problems of the past. The past is viewed as the reason why change has to happen. Often people within the organization view this as meaning that what they did in the past has no value. This climate can often create resistance and an unwillingness by some to participate fully in planning endeavors.

"Appreciative Inquiry suggests an alternative. Recognition that an organization's history can be a powerful source of positive possibility." *(Cooperrider, AI Commons)*

Continuity Scan

In this phase the participants conduct a review/scan of the time lines of the organization, industry, and global perspective. The purpose is to acquire a continuum of the organization's strengths and historical core competencies.

Key Questions:

I. What are all the qualities of your organization

- Processes
- Systems
- Products
- Services
- Programs
- Ways of doing things

that have contributed to your success in the past?

II. What, of these, must be maintained to ensure future success, build innovation, and generate new learning?

The continuity scan serves to jog the collective organizational memory and helps integrate new people to the organization into the collective story. In the remembering and retelling of the organization's history focusing on its strengths and successes, long-time members also experience a renewed sense of excitement as they recall the meaningful aspects of the organization's history and their participation in them.

Day 2: Dream

"Change is a process of having answers questioned, rather than having questions answered." *(Cooperrider, AI Commons)*

Because the primary and central principle of an AI Summit is that "it approaches change energetically, relationally, and in an effectively positive manner," it builds confidence and strength. Reviewing

past best practices, successes, and strengths encourages and empowers people.

Positive images lead to positive actions.

The second day of an AI Summit looks to the future best possible view of how your organization can be in five to 10 years. This exercise is similar to many vision-building exercises.

Sample Dream Questions

"You wake up from a dream and see your organization as you always wished it to be."

It's 2010, how is your organization different?
What is happening?
What are people saying about your organization? ← **Positive Change Core**
Who are its clients, customers, members?
What do they say about the organization?

Day 3: Design

Communication

In recent years there has been a noticeable positive change in some organizations in the ways union and management get to mutually satisfied outcomes. One typical form of organizational conversation is negotiation. Usually this is represented by a process whereby the knowledge within the system is more separate and fragmented. People enter into negotiation to ensure that their own interests are protected. As a consequence, people do not form a positive sense of the whole organization, and are more often than not polarized into their differences rather than energized by their commonalities.

Appreciative Inquiry encourages the use of narrative forms of conversation to create a sense of the whole picture inclusive of everyone. Through storytelling, AI builds on positive and meaningful human encounters. "Meaning is made among people, not among facts and data. Stories provoke the collective imagination and liberates people to create a preferred future together." *(Cooperrider, AI Commons)*

Provocative Propositions

It is at this phase of the AI Summit that provocative propositions are written. These describe the ideal state of circumstances that will foster the climate that creates the possibilities to do more of what works." *(Hammond, 1998, 39)*

Provocative propositions are derived from stories that actually occurred in the organizational history, thus they are grounded in fact, in success, in past best practices and capture the very essence of the empowering stories.

Sample of How to Write a Proposition:

- Find examples of the best from the interviews.
- Determine what circumstances made the best possible (in detail).
- Take the stories and envision what might be.
- Write an affirmative statement (a provocative proposition) that describes the ideal state as if it were already happening.
- To write the proposition, apply "what if" to all the common themes.
- Write affirmative present-tense statements incorporating the common themes.

(Hammond, 1998, 42)

Day 4: Destiny

This last phase is the action part of the AI Summit building on the Discovery, Dream, and Design Components.

The method designers suggest that this is the time to invite personal and group initiative and self-organizing.

The outcome of the Appreciative Inquiry approach should demonstrate the group's "commitment to action and support for those who choose to go forward working on behalf of the whole." *(Cooperrider, Al Commons)*

Activities to Action

- Generation of ideas of possible actions.
- Select inspired actions
- Open space groups form emergent task groups with cooperative agreements and task achievement
- Closing of the summit

Commentary:

The focus of the AI Summit is not common ground but higher ground. All the processes from the inquiry interviews, small group discussions, and whole system meetings are meant to encourage and emerge the most meaningful, innovative, and moving ideas.

"The goal is to highlight affect, affinity, and meaning in organizational decision-making. *(Cooperrider, AI Commons)*

The organizations where an AI Summit might best be used are varied. In the AI Commons, a variety of documented case studies are provided. These are collections of actual AI Summits in business and public institutions.

In broad terms though the authors note that an AI Summit can best be used when:

- The task requires high level of participation.
- There is a need to accelerate the process of change.
- There has been an experience with highly diverse and at times conflicting groups.
- There is a need to integrate and make sense out of a wide-range of change initiatives.

As Margaret Wheatley noted in *Leadership and the New Science,* it is time to invite innovation and creativity into our social institutions.

"Appreciative Inquiry is a whole system positive change process of moving an organization towards its highest potential—the highest ideas imaginable among its members and stakeholders. A new

generation of organization practice is being evolved for the 21st Century." *(Cooperrider, AI Commons)*

> When the task at hand is complex, multi-cultural and requiring unprecedented levels of cooperation an AI Summit can serve the purpose. At GTE, an Appreciative Inquiry 4-D process was used to bring 200 union leaders (CWA and IBEW) and management leaders together to commit to and co-create a company wide union-management partnership. Appreciative Inquiry enabled participants to focus on the significant task of creating positive partnerships throughout the company while at the same time fostering reconciliation within previously antagonistic relationships. The meeting started with palpable tension among participants—most of it unspoken; and it ended with a resounding vote and call to include AI training for every employee in the company as part of the partnership initiative. *(Whitney, Cooperrider, 2000, 5)*

Conclusion and Guiding Principles for Successful Strategic Planning

"The Harvest: Reap What You Sow"

Throughout this workbook I have tried to provide the reader with some fresh ideas drawn from the writings of some very innovative and visionary thinkers. I have also wanted to present current and effective approaches on planning methodologies that will serve as a practical and useful guide for boards of directors and leadership persons to consider.

The bibliography extends the use of the workbook by including further excellent resources, planning workbook, and useful websites. Many of the major voluntary sector national organizations like the United Way of Canada, the Volunteer Centres, and the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy among others also have excellent links on a host of important and useful matters related to the voluntary sector.

Though I have reviewed only a small segment of the literature on planning in this workbook, I believe this resource does contain some of the current best practices in the field of organizational planning. The vast amount of material and literature on planning that exists suggest to me that the research, theory, and practical experiences of effective planning approaches will continue to attract wide interest.

After all the hard work, planning, and the many hours dedicated to meetings, you will hopefully have brought into fruition a useful and effective planning process. Continue to build on your successes and learn from processes that may not have achieved all you had hoped for…these are the seeds to be planted in the next season!

After a group has worked with dedication and commitment on a planning process, celebrate your success! Community rituals suitable to your group are excellent ways in which to acknowledge the fruits of your collective efforts. Like a well-tended garden patch, an effective planning process follows a natural progression. Doing the right work in getting started—planning to plan, paying attention to the important and essential elements on which to build the plan—the good soil should contribute to a healthy, sustained, and renewed organization.

The Support Center of America published the following guiding principles for strategic planning in 1997. This is a useful template and guide with which to conclude this workbook.

Guiding Principles for Successful Strategic Planning:

- Leads to action
- Builds on shared vision that is values-based
- Is inclusive, participatory process in which board and staff take on shared ownership
- Accepts accountability to the community
- Is externally focused and sensitive to the organization's environment
- Is based on quality data
- Requires an openness to questioning the status quo
- Is a key part of effective management

(Support Center of America, 1997, web page)

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All photos taken by Anne E. Campbell

The End

Anne E. Campbell
July 3, 2003

For over 25 years Anne worked as an educator in her home province of Newfoundland and Labrador. For a good portion of this time she served as a member of a religious community, the Presentation Sisters, in a variety of places including St. John's, Mount Carmel, Benoit's Cove, Port au Port, Stephenville and Davis Inlet, Labrador. Throughout her career in education she thoroughly enjoyed the richness of experiences afforded her in these diverse communities, both urban and rural, and the wildly remote and beautiful coast of Labrador. The unparalleled opportunity to live in so many places and to engage in creative community work with so many wonderful people has enriched her life immensely.

Anne joined the YWCA of Saskatoon as Executive Director in 1995 and began another phase in her life's journey. The opportunity to work in the Voluntary sector in Saskatoon has been a valuable experience for her. The people she has met in this beautiful prairie city truly embody the art of collaboration and prairie community spirit. The initiative of bringing the Saskatoon Community Service Village into reality has been a highpoint in Anne's work and life. "The Village," located adjacent to the YWCA, houses 15 community-based social services agencies and is a lively and integrated co-location endeavour.

Anne was born and raised in St. John's, Newfoundland and shared a wonderful family experience growing up with her parents, one sister and two brothers. She graduated from Memorial University and the University of Toronto and has studied at St. Paul's in Ottawa and Boston College in Boston. Like so many Newfoundlanders she eventually made the choice to leave her home province to pursue other ambitions, though her heart is "always held fast" by her island home. Life in Saskatoon has allowed her to observe the diversity of Canada and through her travels in the west she has come to deeply appreciate the beauty of this wonderful country. She enjoys gardening on her acreage, amidst drought, insects, and wild winds which has deepened her appreciation of all pioneers, past and present, who have worked the land.

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