Incoming President’s Planning Workbook
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Congratulations -
You are the NEW Chief Elected Officer

You have been selected to serve as the chief elected officer\(^1\) of a membership organization. In your role as the leader, you are responsible for guiding the activities and programs to ensure that you represent the membership’s interests and issues properly!

The *Incoming President's Planning Workbook* has been developed to provide a format for planning your term of office\(^2\). By reviewing the basic documents and structures of your association; setting specific goals and objectives; assigning deadlines; and delegating to board members, committees and staff, your term of office will be full of accomplishments and satisfaction.

As you plan your goals on the following pages, you will benefit by having several documents accessible to you. These include:

- Membership Application
- Minutes from Recent Board Meetings
- Bylaws and/or Articles of Incorporation
- Budget & Recent Financial Report
- Newsletters
- Roster of Current or Incoming Board Members
- Roster of Districts or Chapters
- Strategic Plan for Organization (if one exists)
- Committees Roster

So, pick up a pen, and let’s get started with this workbook.

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1 Synonymous with the title of PRESIDENT, CHAIRMAN, CHAIRWOMAN, or CHAIR.
2 You are encouraged to share this workbook with your incoming Vice President and other key leadership, in order to receive maximum input for organizational planning. You may want to share a blank copy of this book with the Vice President for independent input, or share your completed pages by mail, fax, or in person. Work with staff or the immediate past president if you need assistance.
The Importance of Planning
Introduction by Robert C. Harris, CAE

Planning defines a vision of where the organization needs to go in the future, and uses that vision to guide the day-to-day decision making process. The plan functions as a compass or direction for finding the best ways to meet members’ needs. During planning, consideration must be given to available resources, such as the number and willingness of volunteers, your staff size, and the association’s budget.

While a plan is similar to a road map, it is NOT a well-defined, specific route to a set of goals; rather, it serves as a flexible guide. The organization and leadership must be able to adapt the influences of technology, economics, politics, demographic and other trends on an ever-changing environment.

Several factors are essential to successful planning:

- **Assumptions** must be made for forming the basis of the plan.
- **Internal** (organization) strengths and weaknesses must be identified. (Refer to the "Organization Report Card" in the workbook.)
- **External opportunities** and threats must be carefully considered. (Refer to the "Trends and Issues" page in the workbook.)
- A **mission statement** must be clearly understood and built upon throughout the planning process. (Refer to the "Mission Statement" page in the workbook.)
- **Goals** must be set for categories of association activities organized by committee or work group.
- **Strategies** to accomplish the mission statement and goals must be written, using action verbs, work assignments, and deadlines. (Refer to the "Committee Worksheets.")

Once this workbook is completed, it is suggested that a more formal document be prepared so that further input can be provided by others, such as chapters, officers, key contacts and staff. Finally, the board of directors may want to adopt the document as the official plan. Anticipate that it will need to be modified from time to time as successive officers, industry trends and staff efforts impact the association.

For better results, a member of the organization should act as the "PLAN CHAMPION" to constantly remind the board to refer to the mission and goals, to encourage updates to the plan, and to re-evaluate the goals and strategies regularly.

My "Plan-Champion" for the year will be: ________________________________.
How to Avoid Planning Failure

Plans fail for several reasons. By taking into consideration the most common reasons for failure during the planning process, the organization's plan has a better chance of being effective over the next months and years.

- Failure to be committed to the plan. It's easy to ignore the organization's needs while leaders and members redirect their time and efforts to other activities. The association must create an environment where members are committed to the organization and its plan.

- Lack of clear, actionable, attainable and verifiable goals and objectives in the plan. Every step of the plan must include assignments and deadlines in order to accomplish the objectives. Vague statements in a plan lead to failure.

- Underestimating the importance of the plan leads to failure. The leaders and staff must be committed to the plan, follow its suggestions, update it and use it as a measure of the organization's progress.

- Strategies that don't fit in the plan only cause confusion and misdirection. All missions, purposes, objectives, strategies, policies, rules, procedures, programs and budgets must fit within the "big picture" of the association.

- Clear statements must be used in writing the plan. For members and staff to follow and implement the plan they must be able to understand every statement and objective without having to interpret their meanings.

- If planners set their expectations too high, everyone will be disappointed when goals are not achieved. For example, suggesting that membership can be doubled within three months may be unrealistic – and thus, the planners, the plan, the staff and the organization are discredited. Plan formulators must incorporate realistic expectations.

In your role as the chief elected officer, you must write a good plan. The Incoming President's Planning Workbook is intended to help you create a clear plan that you can refer to frequently during your term of office.
Using Volunteers to Write the Plan

Officers


Members


Guests & Consultants


Staff


Date(s)


Use this page to acknowledge those people whom you invite to help write the goals and objectives. Whether you ask for written input by mail, communicate via a conference call, or convene a weekend retreat, the participants deserve acknowledgment for offering their contributions of ideas and hard work.

3 One thing you'll find during your term of office is that people will work harder if you recognize them often, saying "thank you" frequently and giving them credit when they do a good job. Be creative, and selective, with your gratitude. Maybe you'll give awards and plaques at the end of your term. In the interim consider sending thank you notes often, recognizing people from the podium for a job well done, and giving out something as simple as a gift certificate for pizza or yogurt to show your appreciation for their help.
The Mission Statement

Do not proceed without being able to complete this page!

**Mission Statement** refers to the initial declaration in the plan that defines the fundamental reason that the organization exists and establishes the scope for its major activity areas. The mission statement is the *foundation of the plan*.

The statement should be one or two precisely worded sentences. Many mission statements closely reflect the overall purpose of the organization. Usually the mission statement can be found in the bylaws, articles of incorporation or in the membership brochure. (If for some good reason the mission statement needs attention or rewriting, you may want to make recommendations and assign the job to the Bylaws Committee.)
**Trends & Issues Impacting your Association**

The organization president must take into account the **trends and issues impacting the organization**. For example, new technology, competition and economic recession all impact the association and its members. It is critical that the chief elected officer identify, *even anticipate*, major trends so that members' needs can be adequately met by the board or directors and staff.

Identify the trends and issues you think will influence the organization during your term of office:

**Economic:**

**Technological:**

**Political/Governmental:**

**Social/Demographics:**
Use an Association “Report Card”

It is important to evaluate the health of the organization and its programs. This is a "report card" check list to consider your perspectives on how well the association is performing.

1. What is the primary reason members join?

2. What is the most valuable benefit offered?

3. What is the least valuable benefit offered?

4. What is the most important goal to be accomplished this year?

Assign (check-off) a grade for each of these categories of activity:

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A – Perfect    B – Good    C – Average    D – Poor    F – Failing    N/A – Not Applicable
Delegate Work to Committees

The most effective organizations form committees to accomplish the work. One way for a president to accomplish his or her plan is to DELEGATE – especially to the committees.

Typically, the president inherits committees that were formed through the authority of the bylaws or by the immediate past president. The bylaws generally call for two types of committees: STANDING COMMITTEES and AD HOC COMMITTEES. It is advised that you take a moment now to identify the committees that already exist in your association.

Standing committees are a permanent part of the organization's structure. They continue indefinitely and are usually described in the bylaws or charter. Ad hoc committees are temporary, and are similar to a task force. An ad hoc committee is formed for the purpose of handling a specific concern. When the committee accomplishes its goal, it disbands.

While it is possible to accomplish nearly all of your objectives by using committees, remember – they are only as good as the management skills of the president.

This workbook encourages you to break down the categories of organization business and then assign much of the work to the committee chairmen. The pages can be used to cover key areas of business, for instance, membership, convention or government affairs; or they can be correlated with the standing and ad hoc committees. Objectives and deadlines must be set and given to the staff and chairmen.

The manual describes more committees than the average organization utilizes. If this is the case, committees can be combined, eliminated (if the bylaws permit) or assigned at a later time. (You may have to add pages if your need to add committees.) Often committees grow over time and continue for no known reason...combining and eliminating committees may serve to streamline your plan.

Committees will not accomplish their work just because it has been assigned. It is important that the president require the committees to be made up of qualified members, each dedicated to the association. Each committee chairman should be charged with reporting to you, the president, on a regular basis. For example, you might require a written report within 20 days after the committee meets. Or, you might ask committee chairman to meet with the executive officers from time to time. Call the chairmen to confirm that they understand your goals and that deadlines necessary are being met.

In summary, the responsibilities of a volunteer president require organizational and delegation skills. Committees are an excellent resource for accomplishing the goals and objectives during your term of office.

4 Synonymous with chairwoman and chairperson.
Choosing your Committee Chairs

An effective committee requires an effective chairperson.

While your committee may be composed of willing, able and dedicated individuals, it is the responsibility of the chair to ensure that the committee’s objectives are met in a timely fashion – and that those objectives continue to serve the best interests of your organization.

The duties of a committee chair include:

• working with the Executive Board and other key association staff to plan the committee’s goals and strategies
• leading committee meetings – fostering discussion, creative thinking, analysis, and implementation of strategies to meet goals
• motivating committee members to action, and following up on their efforts
• maintaining records and reporting on the progress of the committee
• evaluating the work performed by the committee

Because the chair plays such a critical role in completing the work you delegate to the committee, it is important to review the qualifications of your candidates carefully. Examining the professional history of a candidate can provide useful information about the candidate’s ability to serve as an effective chair.

Candidates should have:

• the ability to communicate effectively and concisely
• the willingness to listen to (and acknowledge) others’ feelings
• the leadership qualities that motivate people to action
• the enthusiasm necessary to take initiative and accept responsibility
• the vision to be able to keep the committee’s work in line with the goals of the larger organization
• knowledge of the area which the committee will address

Finally, be sure to allow yourself enough time to conduct a thorough search. Although choosing a chairperson can be time consuming, it is the only way to ensure that the committees you create will be able to achieve their intended purpose.
Committee Acceptance Form

Please reply by: _______________________ Committee Name: ____________________

Name: ______________________________________________________________________

Organization: ______________________________________________________________________

☐ Yes, I accept your invitation to serve on this committee.

☐ No, I cannot accept your invitation.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ______________________________

Please fax or mail this form back to the association office at your earliest convenience.
The Terminology of Planning

An understanding of the terms used in formulating a plan is essential. Making sure that everyone understands the terms eliminates confusion and facilitates the planning process.

**Time Frames**

Most likely, not all objectives can be accomplished within a single term of the president. Thus, assigning time-frames for completion will allow greater understanding and participation by members and staff. Use the following abbreviations when writing goals and strategies.

- **Short Term (S-T)** means actions within the term or next 12 months.
- **Intermediate (I)** usually means actions extending into the next term or calendar year.
- **Long Range (L-R)** means actions 3 to 5 years from now, or even longer.

**Planning Steps**

Confusion often exists in the use of terms that refer to goals, tasks, strategies, etc. The workbook recommends the following use of terminology, described here from broad to narrow.

**Mission Statement** is the initial declaration in the plan that defines the fundamental reason that the organization exists and establishes the scope for its major activity areas. The mission statement is the foundation of the organization's plan. The statement should be one or two, precisely worded, sentences. Mission statements closely reflect the overall purpose of the organization as described in the bylaws or articles of incorporation.

**Goals (and Objectives)** are the overall priorities (broad generalities) that fit into the scope and intent of the mission statement. For example, a goal might be to double the membership.

**Strategies** refers to specific programs of action requiring a commitment of energy and resources to achieve goals and objectives. (Strategies usually follow goals; several strategies make up the action plan to accomplish the goals.) Strategies make up the day to day action plan. For example, a strategy might be to increase the membership with a growth of 10% new student members within 90 days and to lower the dues for prospective regular members.

(continues …)

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5 It is useful to identify the span or term of your planning. For example, retaining 90% of the current members is a short term (S/T) goal while doubling the membership within four years is a long range (L/R) goal.

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Incoming President’s Planning Workbook
Rev ©1999
Committee Descriptions

Committees are very essential tools for accomplishing organizational goals. This is a convenient list of the most common committees and their functions.

**Executive Committee & Organizational Structure** handles the overall administration, structure, staffing, and documentation (e.g. constitution, mission) that guides the organization. Most bylaws allow the Executive Committee to make emergency decisions and to take care of issues that arise between board meetings. The executive committee is usually composed of the elected officers plus one or two key leaders – for example, the past president or the chairman of the convention committee.

**Finance Committee** oversees the treasury of the organization, as well as its financial instruments, budgets, controls and reports. It is often chaired by the elected treasurer. It should submit a proposed annual budget for board approval, and may undertake fund raising projects.

**Public Relations Committee** handles communications to the targeted audiences of the organization, who are generally prioritized in the order of: (1) members, (2) prospects, (3) allied organizations, (4) government, and (5) general public. It may be responsible for reviewing and updating publications and acquiring meaningful articles for the newsletter.

**Membership Development Committee** targets audiences for membership, successfully enrolling new members while retaining current members. Specific, quantitative goals and deadlines for enrollment and retention should be set by the president or the committee chairman. It should regularly review the organization’s membership strategies.

**Member Services and Benefits Committee** coordinates the tangible and intangible benefits that members receive by joining and supporting the organization. It should establish (1) that there is a member need for the service, (2) that the service is unique and available to members only, and (3) that funds are available to cover the administrative costs of the service. It may enlist outside sources and providers who meet these criteria.

**Government Relations Committee** reviews proposed laws and rules, taking timely action to support or oppose issues that affect the organization and the profession. It organizes efforts to block unfavorable regulations and support favorable laws in state agencies and in legislature, and often retains a professional lobbyist.

**Communications and Publications Committee** refers to the communication network developed by the organization to keep members and prospects abreast of the organization’s activities. It maintains newsletters, magazines and other communication tools that reach members and prospects.

(cont’d …)
**Education, Seminar and Convention Committee** takes responsibility for meetings sponsored by the organization. With the assistance of staff, the committee should plan cost effective, profitable events that further the professional goals of the organization’s membership. The workload handled by this committee may require establishment of subcommittees – e.g. "trade show" and "continuing education credit" committees.

**Awards Committee** implements programs to recognize members who contribute beyond the usual efforts. The more thorough the plan, the more distinguished the awards. It may also handle fund raising efforts for scholarship.

**Ethics Committee** is concerned with image of the organization and the actions of its members. Committee may monitor member actions, handle complaints and enforce a code of conduct. Consumer education also may be a responsibility of the committee.

**Nominations and Elections Committee** reviews and makes recommendations about individuals who are qualified and willing to serve on the board of directors. It ensures that the organization continues to operate smoothly during transitions of the organization’s elected officials, and may be asked to present written and verbal reports to the membership.

**Associate or Supplier Committee** refers to the committee representing and composed of supplier members. The committee should provide valuable opportunities for associate members and make sure they have a voice in the organization.

**Bylaws Committee** is responsible for reviewing and maintaining the governing documents of the organization, and for recommending proposed changes when necessary. Often the elected secretary is the committee chairman.

**Long Range Planning Committee** develops long term goals for the organization. It considers trends that may affect the organization, as well as the projected needs, objectives, and priorities of the membership. Its work should result in the creation of or amendments to the association's strategic plan, which normally covers a five year period.

**Additional Committee Descriptions:**
Committee Objectives Form

Chairman:________________________ Vice Chair:__________________________

Committee Members:____________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

Primary Goals & Objectives (Time Frame:  S-T/I/L-R ↓↓)

1. 
2. 
3. 

Secondary Goals & Objectives:

1. 
2. 
3. 

Some Strategies for Accomplishing the Goals:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

Budget (if applicable) $_______________ Committee Type  □ Standing  □ Ad Hoc