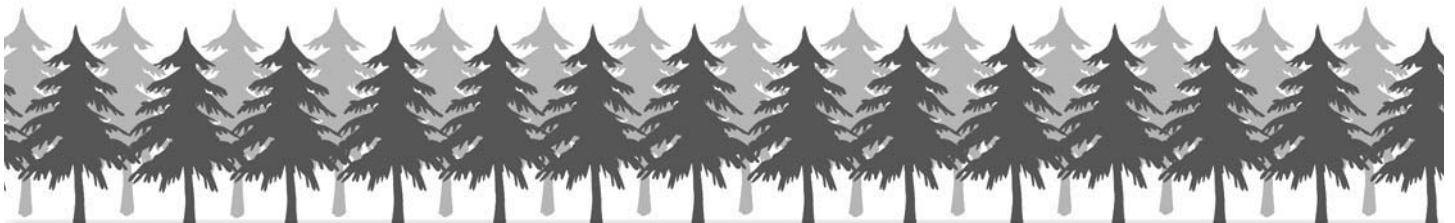


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## ***9. Planning – Implementation – Evaluation***





### Introduction

The importance of planning cannot be stressed enough. However, plans are just plans – once they are in place, it is important to implement them (take action) and then evaluate what happened as a result. Plan – Implement – Evaluate. Simple enough – but surprisingly not followed very often. Many groups go directly to action and then more action and rarely plan or evaluate. Others get stuck in planning and have difficulty implementing the plans they've made and often end up doing what has already been done over and over again. This section of the handbook looks at each of these three components (planning – implementation/action – evaluation) and provides some basic information and tools to get on with it.

### Planning

There are many different types of plans and no real firm rules about what they are called. The most common ones are: strategic; operational; and programming or project planning. Strategic plans set the overall direction and big picture goals of the organization and are usually the responsibility of the board of directors. Operational plans are sometimes called implementation plans and outline how the goals of the strategic plan will be reached. They are usually the responsibility of the senior staff (with input from others) and done annually.

Program or project plans are more detailed overviews of either the individual programs to be offered or a project that is going to be undertaken. They normally follow a similar format that outlines the vision – goals – actions to be taken – desired outcomes – timeline and resources.

**“I agree with Bill Cosby when he said that without leaps of imagination, or a time for dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities . . . dreaming after all is a form of planning.” – Flo Frank Community Facilitator**

### Goal Setting

Goal setting is important but it need not be complicated. The following attributes are components in setting and achieving goals. When you define a goal it must have SMARTS, it must be:

Specific	Write down your goal. Make a step-by-step plan.
Measurable	How do you know when each step is completed? How do you keep an accurate record?
Achievable	Are you prepared and can you meet this challenge? Is it a sensible plan?
Realistic	Are you able to attain your goal through reasonable efforts?
Timed	When can each step be started? When can it all be completed?
Supported	Who could and will help? How could they help?

### S M A R T S

### Implementation - Action Plans

Action plans are plans that provide the what, who and when for the bigger plans or concepts. They are the action steps to get to where we are going. Implementation is Doing It! The line between different planning processes can be a bit fuzzy but we all know that there is a clear difference between planning and doing something. Ultimately, our communities don't care how much planning we do (even though they benefit from programs and events being well planned) – they assume things will be planned, but mostly they are interested in what is happening – not how it was planned.

It is really up to each organization to determine how much planning is needed and how much action can be taken without planning. This determination will also help sort out which pieces will fall into which plans. All plans require action – so just do it (get going) and refer back to your plans when you need to so that you are sure to be moving in the right direction. Try not to get caught up in the “consulting with the community” syndrome. While asking the community for input or to identify priorities is an excellent thing to do, it is often the reason given for why things don't happen. Too much talk and not enough action.

### Supporting – Enabling Strategies

There are other activities that require more detailed thinking. Sometimes called enabling strategies, they are basically plans within the plans. The reason they are called enabling strategies is because they enable action to be taken and may include things that require special planning such as:

- Communication
- Human resources
- Partnerships
- Budgeting
- Fundraising
- Advocacy
- Evaluation

You may have heard each of the terms above with the word plan or strategy behind it, signifying that additional thought needs to be given to: what is required; in what order of priority; who will do it; when it will happen, and how much it will cost.

### Evaluation

In order to ensure that our programs, plans and actions have been effective and to know that we are reaching our goals, evaluation is the process used. Evaluations can be simple and straightforward or more detailed and in-depth. Sometimes they tell us what we have done and what difference it made – other times an evaluation can tell us how people feel about what we are doing. Emotional evaluations are ones where we ask people how they feel about what is happening or ask them for their stories to demonstrate a particular point or goal. These stories (anecdotal information) are very moving and help to put the soul or personality into what are often just facts, numbers and statistics.

Evaluations can be done by the organization itself or through an outside (objective) source. Either way, it is good to get in the habit of evaluation because it provides us with benchmarks (a starting point to measure future progress against) and more and more funders are insisting that it be done to see the short-term and long-term progress being made and the impact of what we do in our communities.

There are other specific reasons for evaluation such as to assess something that has happened and to guide any adjustments that need to be made in a program or an approach, or to simply gather data or information. Evaluation provides the information and with a good analysis (determining what the information means) it can be used for advocacy, promotion or to provide the reason or rationale to make changes. Evaluation is a very powerful tool and should be included in any significant program or community activity undertaken.



### The Northern Context

Everything and everyone in the north seem to be connected. This is one of the beauties of having a northern culture and a northern approach. Some of the main components to consider in northern planning are: Aboriginal values; respect for elders; lots of flexibility; enjoying fun and food; and a willingness to work together to get things done. The pace is different (slower and more thoughtful) and there is strong support for families and youth.

People comment on how comfortable it is to work in the north because things aren't always planned out in every detail – there's always room to change and add new ideas. Most people like to plan, but in the north, our approach is to make the plan in pencil so that it can be changed and not to get too upset if things don't go the way we planned – something else will happen and we'll go with it and make the most of it. We believe that whoever shows up are the right people and whatever happens is the right thing. Since everything is connected to everything else, we use holistic approaches, consensus decision making and we take the time we need to include everyone.

Keep in mind that planning should be based on what you have heard from the community or potential participants of programs, but don't keep asking them what they want or consulting on priorities. These things don't change all that often. Just get on with the plan, check back with the action steps, keep a record of what happened and evaluate what it all means.

### What's Important to Know?

- ★ Planning is important in order to make the “doing” easier.
- ★ There are different types of plans for different reasons but often they are similar.
- ★ Evaluation is very important to know what has been accomplished, to provide statistics when needed, and to make continuous improvement.
- ★ All planning should be flexible enough to allow for adjustments and changes.
- ★ You don't need specialists for very many things, trust yourself and trust the experience of the community.
- ★ The north has a more casual approach to planning and things always work out.
- ★ Don't get stuck in planning, get going as soon as possible.

### Tips and Advice

1. Leave room in your planning for new or better ideas or approaches.
2. Make sure everyone understands their role in the plan.
3. A plan is just a road map to a destination – if a goal changes, revisit the plan.
4. Make sure the program, event or action is compelling, interesting and do-able.
5. Keep good records (who came, what happened, what worked, what it cost etc)
6. Get better at evaluation – it is important.
7. If you are new to the north, listen, pay attention and don't try to change things.



### Story

The Steering Committee in Sandy Bay has done a lot of planning over the last few years. They started with coordinating their summer programming between the school recreation program (NC&SRCP) and the village recreation program, as well as other groups in the community like the culture camp organizers. Now they have an annual program plan, including a budget, that they use to guide what they do for each season of the year, and which is also broken down into every month. Reviewing and following the plan helps them do the things they said they were going to do, being flexible as new things come up.

“Do what you know and what works for resources and make sure that you (and the community) know what will be happening each month and year. Remember that you can only do so much.” – Laurie Cook, Southend

“Keep records of what happens so they can be referred to by new staff or over time. Sometimes good ideas from a long time ago can be good ideas again.” – Colleen Charles, Community Relations Coordinator, Northern Sport, Culture and Recreation District.

### Toolbox Connection

In the toolbox you will find the following tools related to this section:

- Terms and Definitions – Types of Plans
- Strategic Planning – Format and Explanations
- Operational Plan Template
- From Ideas to Action: Action Plan Format
- Example – Action Plan
- Evaluation Tool