



2022

PLANNING GUIDE FOR TRIBAL LEADERS

INTRODUCTION

This planning guide is designed to equip leaders with innovative methods and tools to improve strategic planning, collaboration and operational effectiveness. Is your team, department or organization ready for a better system for managing your strategy, projects and grants? To assess your readiness to manage the implementation of your strategic priorities, **please respond to the following 6 questions (1-strongly disagree, 6-strongly agree):**

| | |
|--|-------------|
| We develop a yearly strategic plan and have a consistent system for tracking our progress. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| We can quickly update and adapt our plan as changes occur in our environment. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| Our grant management system includes tracking of objectives and work plans. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| Our projects and grants have clear ownership, team members, resources and timelines established. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| We coordinate and collaborate effectively with key partners. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| We have a consistent method for reporting progress to our tribal council or board. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| TOTAL. | |

If your total score was in the 20's – 30's or below, you may be ready for a more robust system to manage your strategy implementation. For nearly 20 years, we have worked with tribal leaders to develop a system to improve planning, implementation and ultimately improved services to tribal communities. This planning guide outlines the methodology and toolkit for tribal strategic planning in the 21st Century.

What is a **TribalStrategy**?

A **TribalStrategy**[™] is a one-two page strategic plan that integrates best practices in the areas of leadership, capacity building, strategic thinking, planning and *implementation*. This framework has been used successfully to develop a broad range of plan types including:

- Tribal organizational, department and team strategic plans
- **TAP** (Tribal Action Plans) and TOR (Tribal Opioid Response) Plans
- Integrated Resource Management Plan (IRMP)
- Multi-Department Service Integration Plans
- Comprehensive Economic Development Plans (CEDS)

A New Paradigm – from Plans on the Shelf (POTS) to '**TribalStrategy**'

This approach represents a new way of thinking about how plans are developed and managed. Instead of a 100-page plan stuck in a binder on someone's shelf, a TribalStrategy is actively managed as an online system that simplifies the strategy management process. The TribalStrategy System provides leaders the flexibility to dynamically make adjustments, track action plans as

well as program outcomes. A complete array of tools and reports allow users of TribalStrategy to manage the strategic planning process.

TribalStrategy.org Solution for Strategic Planning

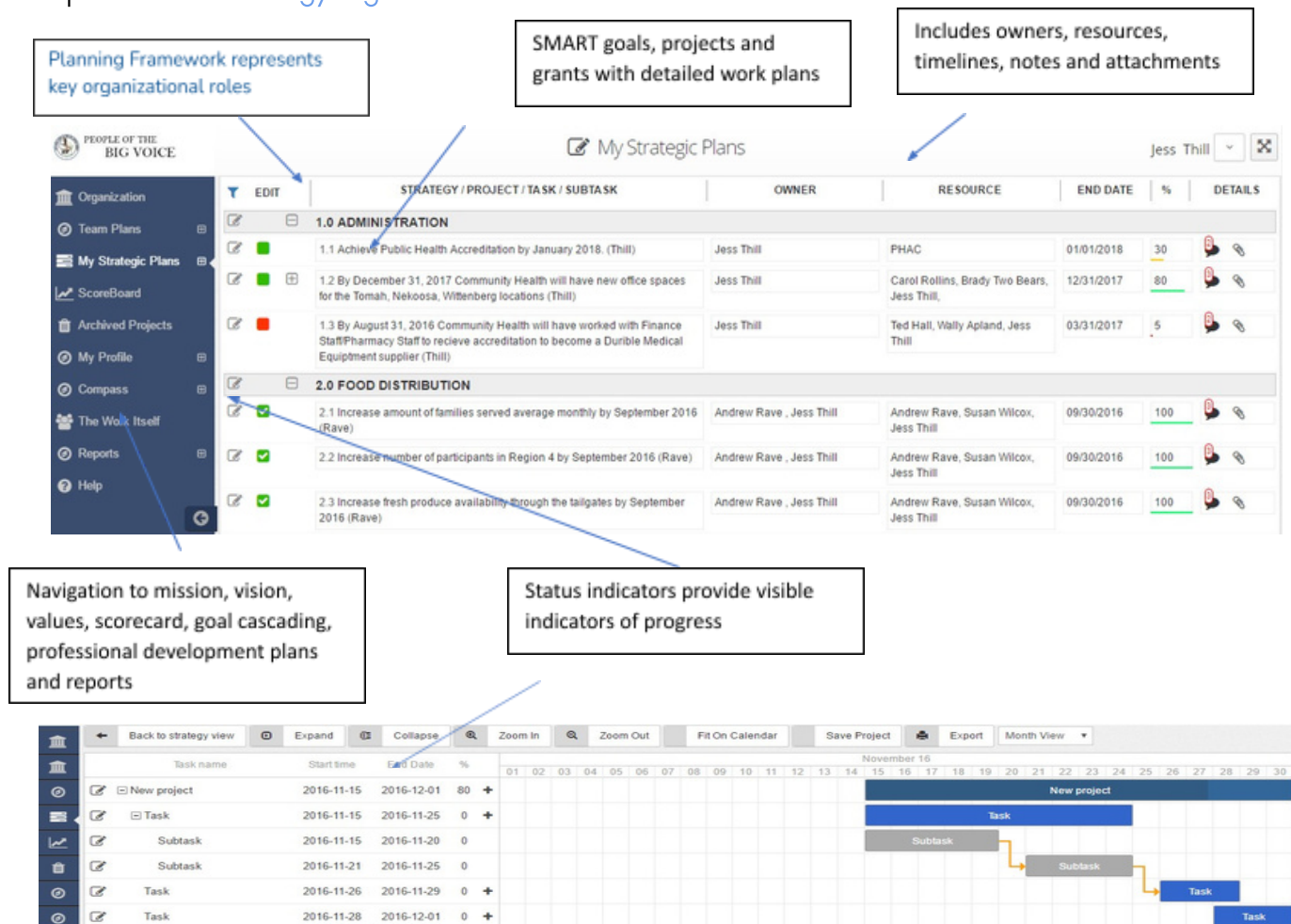
For decades, organizations have persisted in a planning process that does not work. The weaknesses of traditional strategic planning contribute to poor results. Generally strategic plans are:

- Too long
- Take too long to complete
- Not adaptable – the world changes faster than the plan can adapt
- Lack clear ownership of major results and projects, grants and initiatives
- Do not incorporate implementation
- Not translated into work or communicated to those who will implement.

A modern TribalStrategy is different. It incorporates all of the best practices of strategic planning, but also includes elements such as:

- Simplified – one to two pages with clear goals, objectives, grants and projects
- Designed to track progress
- ‘Living, breathing’ – real-time updates weekly, monthly and quarterly
- Transparent – everyone is looking at the same playbook, breaks down silos and improves collaboration

Sample of TribalStrategy.org



One of your primary roles as a leader, is to ensure the organization has clarity regarding **where** it is going and **how** you are going to get there. Your organization needs to work effectively to provide meaningful services to your tribal members – in the midst of a changing environment where the future is more unclear.

This planning guide is designed to help you articulate where you want to go, and how you are going to get there with clarity. In this guide, we explore a new approach to tribal strategic planning, we provide a framework and tools for *producing a tribal strategic plan* but more importantly, *we provide an implementation plan*, that produces meaningful results for your organization and community. This framework includes four fundamental phases of developing a robust strategic plan (a TribalStrategy.) They are:

- ✓ Strategic Thinking
- ✓ Strategic Planning
- ✓ Aligning Organizations and People
- ✓ Strategy Implementation

STEP ONE: STRATEGIC THINKING - Addressing Problems and Opportunities

The starting point for good strategy is **not** goal setting, it is **Strategic Thinking**. Strategy thinking and planning are two separate but related processes. A good strategist starts with identifying the key issues (problems and opportunities) and trends that need to be addressed by your strategic plan. As Richard Rumelt, the author of “Good Strategy/Bad Strategy” stated:

“Bad strategy tends to skip over pesky details such as problems.”

Consider these trends impacting Tribes in 2022

- Wage inflation – how do you retain employees when they can make the same amount working fast food
- Construction costs – what is the impact of 10%–20% inflation on capital projects
- Attitudes towards work – working from home has caused the workforce to rethink what they are willing to put up with (hours, stress, challenging environment). They also want to do meaningful work.
- Unprecedented Federal funding of healthcare and tribal programs
- Impact of remote learning in education
- Surge in the use of fentanyl

Strategic Questions

What other trends have the greatest potential impact on your organization (good and bad?) Which of these challenges or opportunities most need a **strategic response**?

Strategic Thinking Tools

In general, **Strategic Thinking** consists of asking 3 questions:

- What is happening outside the organization that we need to understand and adapt to? (Political, social, economic and technological changes, threats and opportunities)
- How do we develop our internal capacity to adapt to these changes/trends (structure, systems, organizational culture?)
- How do we leverage our assets, resources, and capacities to meet the needs of our community?

Some of the proven tools for exploring these questions include stakeholder and community assessment, **SWOT+** analysis, ~~asset mapping~~ and financial and program audits. There are other powerful assessment tools that can be utilized during the **Strategic Thinking** phase.

** The Forgotten Step ** _____

Please note – these activities can be a complete waste of time if you do not take the next step and translate insight into potential action. Your planning team must explore potential actions that would positively impact your responsiveness, services and capacity. These ‘action planning’ questions would include:

- How do we build upon our strengths and capacities?
- How do we improve our partnerships as we serve a common segment of the community?
- How do we reduce the risk associated with specific trends?

The answers to these questions can become the strategies in your plan. The following is a simple template for documenting potential strategies, projects or actions.

| Strategies, Project or Action | Owner | Resources | Timeline |
|-------------------------------|-------|-----------|----------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

STEP TWO: STRATEGIC PLANNING

Lack of clarity at the top guarantees confusion and lack of focus throughout the organization.
During the strategic planning phase, your team will need to create clarity in the following areas. Please respond to these questions to determine which areas need to be refined:

STRATEGIC PLANNING

| | |
|--|-------------|
| MISSION: We have an updated mission statement that is clear and visible to all employees and our community. We use it guide our decisions on a consistent basis. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| VISION: We have a compelling vision of where we will be in one to five years. We are specific in terms of facilities, capabilities, and services we will be able to provide. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| VALUES: We have established the values that will guide our decisions and interactions with the community and each other. We have integrated the traditional values of our community. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| GOALS: We have translated our vision into a set of 3-5 measurable goals or outcomes. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| STRATEGIES: We have developed specific strategies to achieve our goals and documented who is responsible, what resources are needed and when each goal is to be accomplished. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |

As you review your scores, do you see 'gaps' or areas that need improvement? The leadership's role in strategic planning is to develop a clear picture for **where** you want to go and **how** you are going to get there. As the quote about clarity above indicates, if the picture is not clear at the leadership level, it gets even murkier for those responsible for implementing the plan and providing the services.

The following are ideas, questions and tools to help you improve in each of these areas.

MISSION

As part of the planning process, we recommend reviewing your mission statement and asking your team this question:

What would be different if we consistently operated according to our mission?

The true test of your mission is how it is lived by your leaders and staff. If your mission is to "provide high quality service to your community" but community members find staff unhelpful or your services are bureaucratic and slow, there is an opportunity to better align your service delivery with your mission. *The strategy to do this should be documented in your strategic plan.*

VISION

While the mission is generally stable, the vision can shift with changes in the environment and organizational circumstances. A good practice is to revisit the vision at a minimum of once a year. Vision is important because everyone needs to be able to 'see' your future state.

How do we know we have achieved our vision? The best way is to translate the vision into measurable goals that define success. Ultimately, your TribalStrategy then becomes a description of **what** (the vision and defining goals) and **how** (strategy/strategy drivers) you will do this as an organization, department or team to fulfill your mission.

"To create a vision is to create a reality in your imagination; it is the picture of what you want to have happen. The stronger the image of that vision, the greater the power it has to pull you in its reality."

– T. Elaine Gagne

When working with a team, organization or community, we can develop a **shared** vision or future state in the context of the community needs. The power is in the interaction with others that makes the vision clearer and more compelling. One process for streamlining this discussion is called Destination Statements. The purpose is to help a team quickly express their vision for the future state of the organization in specific terms. During this exercise, each participant shares their answers to the following question:

It is one year in the future, and a reporter from Indian Country Today interviews you about the important progress you have made as a team, department or organization. **What would you want to be able to say has been accomplished?**

As each participant shares their hoped-for future state, you will begin to see common outcomes and projects that are 'compelling' or motivating. They are often specific projects and services like:

- A new youth center
- A facility to help individuals struggling with addiction transition into the community in a healthy way
- Updated law and order code
- More community members fluent in our language and cultural practices
- New business
- A sustainable Behavioral Health service funded in part by 3rd party billing.

Strategic Questions

What would you like to see happen in your community in the next 1-5 years? What organizational capacity would you like to see developed?

Remember! The development of your vision is also informed by the **Strategic Thinking** process – which issues will you successfully address? Which opportunities will you pursue? Which community needs will you meet? Economist Thomas Sowell wrote,

"There are no perfect solutions, there are only trade-offs."

Each strategy produces different (and often imperfect) consequences – your choice of strategies is a function of which consequences you want.

Caution: If the plan is adopted at this stage, it is not a plan, it is a **wish list**. Every organization has limited resources and influence, so it is critical to establish priorities among your choices. You do not have a strategic plan if you have not said 'No' to some of the ideas.

Most organizations will recognize that there are things they will need to start doing as well as stop doing. In this section, we want to provide a model of what this should look like.

One of the impacts of the Covid pandemic; is it has dramatically shrunk the planning timeline and pushed organizations into a ‘response’ mode vs. ‘proactive’ mode. Organizations were forced to accelerate the changes they had considered for some time in areas such as technology for remote services delivery and emergency management.

VALUES

One of my favorite experiences was teaching a leadership class to Nez Perce high school students. I wouldn’t describe the energy as particularly high, until we began discussing their personal missions and values. The question they were to discuss was this:

What traditional values do you value the most and want to incorporate into your lives?

Their engagement was instant! They discussed the lessons learned from grandparents, aunties, and elders. They reviewed which values they wanted to incorporate into their own leadership and future families. It was inspiring! Most organizations have a list of values identified. A simple question to determine how well your team, department and organization is aligned with your values is:

What would we need to change to let our community know we consistently live our values?

Often, the answer to this question comes in the form of different collective behaviors – your work culture, level of service and improved service delivery systems.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES ARE NOT THE SAME

Most goals describe a desired future state in tangible measurable terms, **what** you want to achieve. Strategies include outlined steps for achieving goals, the **how**. Consider all of the different actions needed at home, in the community and in the schools to help one child graduate from high school.

The following further illustrates how goals and strategies are distinctive:

| SMART GOAL (What we want to accomplish) the goal) | STRATEGIES (How we are going to accomplish |
|---|--|
| Increase high school graduation rate from 70%. Owner: Graduation Committee Resource: University Research(project) | 1. Implement new progress tracking to 85% by 2025system (process) 2. Increase extracurricular participation 3. Parental engagement (work culture) 4. Teacher development (work culture) 5. Communication strategies (projects/process) |

SMART Goals

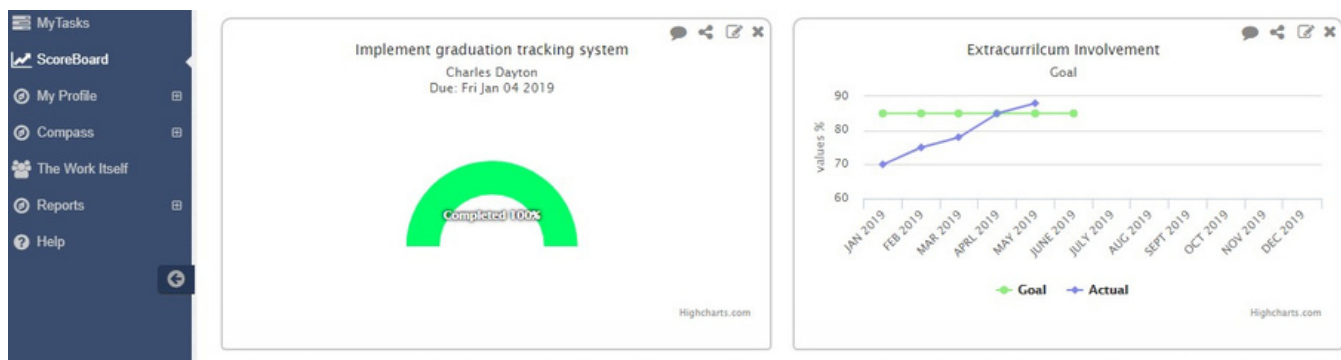
A TribalStrategy SMART goal is slightly different than a traditional SMART goal. Because the goals and projects are developed within a strategic framework and should already be Attainable and Relevant/Realistic. A **TribalStrategy SMART** goal is:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Accountable
- Resources
- Timeline

TRACKING GOALS AND OUTCOMES: *Developing a Performance Scoreboard*

In a tight basketball game, players, coaches and fans glance constantly at the scoreboard to evaluate how they are performing against the clock and their competition. This scoreboard indicates whether they are winning or behind. Take the clock and scoreboard out of the gym and people quickly lose interest. In your organization, *what lets you know that you are winning?*

Sample Performance Scoreboard



In the previous example of a SMART goal – *increase high school graduation rate from 70% to 85%* – how will you know whether you are on track? One indication is whether you are following through on the plan – ex. Implement graduation tracking system (see scoreboard example.) Another is to track predictive metrics (involvement in extracurricular activities) that influence the outcomes measures (graduation).

You predict that by implementing the plans, you will successfully accomplish your goal. This may or may not be true. In the process you may determine that this is the wrong goal or the wrong strategy to engaging students. Plans are often best tested by research, benchmarking evidence-based strategies and exploring options. You learn more quickly by implementing a plan than by planning. This allows you to make adjustments to your plans more quickly and preserve resources and employee morale.

A TribalStrategy comprises of a set of prioritized SMART goals aligned with mission, values and your vision. This plan is also informed by your Strategic Thinking efforts and represents the choices leaders make among various options. It also lists the strategy drivers and action plans that you predict will help you accomplish your goals.

Formatting your Strategic Plan

One method for organizing your plan is to create 4–5 categories or pillars that represent the major roles or organizational functions. For example, a Tribal health clinic might organize its strategies into these five categories or pillars:

Category: **Administration and Organizational Effectiveness**

Project: Update the organizational chart

Project: Develop a communication plan

Category: **Financial Health**

Goal: Reduce Accounts Receivables to 45 days

Project: Implement new accounting software

Category: **Health Services**

Project: Expand dental services

Project: Develop food bank

Category: **Operational Effectiveness and Quality**

Project: Establish functioning quality review committee

Process Improvement: Develop process map and process improvement plan for client admissions

Category: **People and Work Culture**

Project: Develop a 2022 Workforce Development plan

Goal: Develop professional development plans for all staff by March 1st

If these categories are comprehensive enough, all your initiatives, projects and grants can fit into the appropriate categories. Tribal departments will often have a broad administration category, then list the programs as categories. The SMART initiatives, projects and grants are 'nested' under each program name.

STEP THREE: ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT AND CULTURE

All organizations are perfectly aligned to get the results they get. – Arthur Jones

FIVE DRIVERS

An essential step in strategy execution is to align the organization to achieve the your intended results. This includes working on systems, structures and developing people. Once the goals and strategies are established, those responsible for implementation need to translate the strategies into action. Your Tribal Strategy generally consists of five types of disciplines or 'strategy drivers' that, when implemented, help you achieve your goals.

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Projects | A project is a sequence of tasks, with a beginning and end date, designed to create desired outcomes (ex. build a home) |
| Process Improvements | Process improvement begins with 'as is' process steps and then redesigns the process according to the desired outcomes. (ex. improve enrollment process.) |
| Organizational Design | Organizational Design is a methodology for aligning workflow, structures and systems with your desired outcomes. |
| Policy | Good policy describes how individuals respond to various situations to produce fair and consistent outcomes. Good policy is easily communicated. |
| Work Culture | Work Culture is a description of the collective behaviors of your team or organization. Do they show up on time, provide good customer service, follow through on assignments, etc. Drivers include training, coaching, rewards and most importantly, leadership modeling. |

A **TribalStrategy** contains a mix of these drivers with the majority being project oriented. Observe how the following TribalStrategy incorporates three of these driver types:

| EDIT | STRATEGY / PROJECT / TASK / SUBTASK | OWNER | RESOURCE | END DATE | % |
|--|---|------------|------------------------------|------------|-----|
| 1.0 ADMINISTRATION - Promote efficient operations throughout the tribal organization | | | | | |
| | 1.1 (Project) Implement new accounting system and train staff to utilize (Smith) | Josh Adams | Accounting | 11/30/2016 | 100 |
| | 1.2 (Process Improvement) Reduce accounts receivable from 65 days to 30 days. (Smith) | Fred Smith | Accounting, Housing | 12/31/2016 | 40 |
| | 1.3 (Policy) Update law and order code and communicate organizational wide (Smith) | Josh Adams | Legislative, Law Enforcement | 12/31/2017 | 25 |

Each of these drivers should align with the goal they are intended to help accomplish. This also signals to leaders and staff, what 'strategic' activities they should spend their time on.

STRATEGIC PROJECT AND GRANT MANAGEMENT

The majority of tribal strategic implementation plans consist of a series of **projects**. These may take the form of grants, initiatives or action plans. In *Executing Your Strategy*, the authors articulate this relationship:

"For the strategy to become a reality, it must be converted into the packets of work we call projects. Projects are the **temporary** initiatives that companies put into place alongside their ongoing operations to achieve specific goals. They are clearly defined **packets of work** bound by deadlines and endowed with resources including budgets, people and facilities."

- Executing your Strategy. Morgan, Levitt, Malek

ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT

Once your strategy has been defined with measurable outcomes and goals, the next step is to define the organizational capabilities that will be required to deliver the strategy. For example, if we need better collaboration, efficiency and responsiveness, what changes to our structure, systems, training and information systems will be required to deliver the strategy? **Form follows function** so the first step is to design the processes (needed to provide services), align the structure and systems to deliver the processes and align the people systems.

WORK CULTURE

Think of your work culture as the observable work habits and practices that explain how the organization really operates. This is the visible aspect of work culture. There is also a hidden side of culture (values, beliefs and assumptions) that fundamentally drive the visible side of culture. These two elements, 1) the behaviors and work patterns one can observe and 2) the underlying values and beliefs, are generally regarded by most theorists as being core components of work culture. Focusing on them simplifies things considerably. Part of organizational capacity includes defining the work standards (observable work habits and practices) needed to drive results. Examples of cultural standards include:

- Innovation vs. 'the way we have always done things around here.'
- Collaboration vs. competition with other departments Customer service vs. internal focus
- Inclusion vs. involved only on need-to-know basis Assumption of trust vs. bureaucracy and controls

Strategic Question

As you think of the challenges your organization faces in the next two years, what culture must your organization develop to success fully respond?

ALIGNING PEOPLE – Clear Roles and Responsibilities

"Without clear leadership that aligned each activity and every project investment to the espoused strategy, individuals will use other decisions rules in choosing what to work on: first in, first out, last in, first out, loudest demand; squeakiest wheel, boss's whim, least risk, easiest, best guess as to what the organization needs; most likely to lead to raises and promotion; most politically correct; wild guess."

– **Executing Your Strategy, Morgan, Levitt and Malek**

People alignment consists of two key things

1. Getting the right people with the right skills and experience in the right positions. (structure)
2. Ensuring people understand how they contribute to the strategic and operational goals of the organization. (clarity)

One of the most significant barriers to strategy implementation is when the individuals responsible for implementing a strategy:

1. Don't know the goal or the strategies to achieve the goal.
2. Don't know what they need to do personally to achieve the goal.
3. Don't want to achieve the goal. This can be due to general fear or apathy; perception of conflicting goals; and/or cultural blocks within an organization.

The most effective way to align and engage employees in strategy implementation is to involve them in the development of the plan. This involvement helps them gain ownership by understanding the rationale behind the decisions that are made and demonstrates respect for their ideas. In addition to clarifying ownership of projects and action plans, a powerful tool for empowering employees is the Roles and Responsibility tool.

In the **absence of clear roles** and responsibility, staff operate on their 'best guess' about what should be done – generally leading to conflict, frustration and disengagement. Each employee should have an updated roles and responsibilities document aligned with the department strategic priorities. A best practice is to add the level of initiative, specific deliverables associated with the responsibility and the backup identified. An example would include:

| ROLES/Responsibilities | Initiative Level | Deliverables/quality | Backup |
|--|------------------|--|---------------|
| ADMINISTRATOR | | | |
| Complete yearly budget by June 1st | 3 | Align with dept. strategic priorities | Brenda |
| Staff professional development plan | 3 | Complete by Dec. 1, review quarterly | Brenda |
| Effective communication | 2 | | David |

****1** – wait to be told, **2** – do and report immediately, **3** – do and report periodically

ALIGNING RESOURCES –Strategic Budgeting

In addition to human resources, a good strategist considers all of the available resources and assets. This includes financial, physical, partnerships, and reputation. What would full utilization of your capacity look like? Often, the financial resources are not aligned with the strategic priorities in part because planning and budgeting are viewed as unrelated activities.

Our proven strategic budgeting process that connects your budget to your plan is as follows:

1. Establish strategic priorities based on your desired outcomes (ex. employable community members)
2. Choose a proven budget method
 - a. Budgeting for Outcomes – first identify available funding and identify desired outcomes. Allocate funding based on what activities/departments will produce the desired results. The focus is on outcomes rather than priorities. Outcomes are also defined as your SMART goals from your TribalStrategy plan. This method changes your focus from how much money do we have and how much does it cost, to what do we want and how much are we willing to pay.

b. Priority-Based Budgeting – your budgeting team will match available resources with your approved strategic plan. This method is driven by the concept that the goals and activities that support your organization’s priorities are those that should be funded. When you connect the funding in the budget to the strategic plan, you ensure that funding is available to support the organization achieving its strategic goals.

c. A hybrid of the two is to start with budgeting for outcomes and identify how much funding you have, and then rank your goals based on priority. Once that is complete you can allocate funding to the outcomes with the highest priority. You keep working down your priority list until you are out of funds.

3. The third step is to communicate the Strategic Plan and the budgeting methodology to departments. Explain that all funding requirements should link directly to a Strategic Goal. To ensure department funding requests align between the plan and the budget, each department should present their goals explaining how their department budgets link to the organization’s strategic plan.

4. The fourth step is to compare the previous year’s budget to this year’s plan. Reviewing the previous year’s budget will help identify any activities that are recurring that you should ensure are connected to this year’s strategic goals.

5. The fifth step is where leadership approves a budget that is connected to the plan.

STEP FOUR: STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Eventually, all grand strategies evolve into work.

– Peter Drucker

Plans do not create results; **work and resources do**. Once your ActionStrategy has been completed and approved by the appropriate council or committee, your team will begin the implementation phase. This requires good leadership, project, time and grant management, process improvement and improved accountability. As a best practice, we recommend a formal **plan review** either monthly or quarterly. In this review, you can evaluate:

- Status of key project, grants and initiatives.
- Performance metrics compared to goals.
- Steps for getting key goals/projects/grants.

The more consistent your review process is, the easier it is to establish a cultural norm of **accountability**. Another reason for constant review is that we learn more by implementing our plan than by developing our plan. Unforeseen issues, barriers and opportunities are often only visible once we have begun the journey

A PROJECT PLAN FOR DEVELOPING YOUR TRIBALSTRATEGY

The following is a typical project plan for developing and rolling out your TribalStrategy.

| Project/Task/Sub-Task | Owner | Resources | Timeline |
|---|-------|---------------------------|----------|
| 1.0 Complete the 2022 TribalStrategy | | | |
| 1.1 Strategic Thinking | | Strategy Team | |
| 1.1.1 Complete SWOT+ analysis | | | |
| 1.1.2 Complete organizational system assessment | | | |
| 1.1.3 Review community needs assessment | | | |
| 1.1.4 Review Tribal Council and community priorities | | | |
| 1.1.5 Develop summary reports | | | |
| 1.2 Strategic Planning | | Tribal Adm. /Directors | |
| 1.2.1 Review Mission, Vision and Values | | | |
| 1.2.2 Review Strategic Thinking action plan | | | |
| 1.2.3 Identify and prioritize 1 yr. and 5 yr. goals | | | |
| 1.2.4 Develop strategies to achieve short- and long-term goals | | | |
| 1.2.5 Begin Strategic Budgeting process | | | |
| 1.3 Aligning Organizations and People | | Tribal Adm. /Directors | |
| 1.3.1 Develop project plans for key initiatives and project | | | |
| 1.3.2 Develop a plan to cascade your TribalStrategy to teams | | | |
| 1.3.3 Update employee roles and responsibilities | | | |
| 1.3.4 Align Professional Development plans | | | |
| 1.3.5 Develop plan for aligning structure and processes | | | |
| 1.4 Strategy Execution | | Directors/Teams | |
| 1.4.1 Training on productivity, projects and effective meetings | | | |
| 1.4.2 Schedule monthly/quarterly plan reviews | | | |
| 1.4.3 Provide leadership coaching to develop capacity | | | |

NEXT STEPS

A good **TribalStrategy** includes strategic thinking, planning, organizational alignment and execution. It is a process rather than an event and requires better tools than have been available previously. Our mission is to develop strategic leaders and equip them with the methodology and management system to improve their communities. Please contact us and let us know how we can support this important work.

