



SEED'S TIP OF THE MONTH:

Who Will Bring Your Plans to Life?

Visioning and planning can be heady activities if we are not careful. At SEED we urge our client partners not to think too much! It is easy enough to produce an exquisitely articulated vision statement and a brilliantly crafted strategic plan. But we tend to hold our fine documents apart from us; we preserve them like precious belongings and never fully use them up.

This is the number one reason our clients find us at SEED. We have been approached by (weary and discouraged) leaders with existing strategic plans exceeding 200 pages. Tremendous organizational capacity has been expended and much value may have been gained. But a gulf remains between articulation and implementation of their strategic plans.

If only planning were not kept separate from action! Our approach at SEED removes this separation. But if you already have your plan and you're feeling stuck, we can certainly create a bridge to action. What might that bridge be?

Let's start with what matters most: People.

Who shares the core values that drive your work? Who is deeply passionate about your potential impacts? The second "E" in SEED is a reminder to **Ennoble** these folks to roll up their sleeves and join in the fun.

Strategic planning cannot be implemented from the top down, with a few people delegating and a lot of people insufficiently motivated to execute.

From the very start of a strategic planning process, enlist many inputs. As described in [recent tips](#), those invited to dream are much more likely to invest in bringing big dreams to life, than those whose perspectives and ideas have not been tapped.

When long-term visions emerge you can avoid the time drain of trying to group-write by asking one or two participants to compile the team's ideas into a cohesive whole. They can quickly sketch out how that vision might evolve over time. Then, *all* of the visioning participants should be invited to refine the [vision-in-stages](#) once it is drafted.

You can see how we are feeding many birds with one seed, right? By continually expanding the circle of those engaged, and getting different eyes on the prize, we are establishing shared ownership and no doubt dreaming bigger, too.



WHO WILL BRING YOUR PLANS TO LIFE?

Strategic planning is really more about ennobling participants than defining plans.

With a work plan in place, you need one or two “catalyst leaders” to oversee implementation. Keep an eye out for them through the visioning and planning process: Who seems to grasp the big ideas and think organizationally? Who understands the larger context and environmental factors that can support or impede progress? Who facilitates maximum participation across the team, values every voice, and attends to the specifics of goal articulation? In other words, who seems to handle both “the forest and the trees” of your work?



Look beyond the usual suspects; find junior staff or board members exhibiting this potential to be your catalysts. You may wish to recommend them or invite them to volunteer.

If you are a small organization, look for two catalyst leaders to oversee implementation. If you are a large organization, your work plan may encompass multiple planning teams. In this case, you will want one or two leaders per team.

Once you have amassed your people power, all you need is this bit of structure:

Your catalyst leaders will facilitate a monthly (or so) meeting of the work team formed to implement the goals laid out in your strategic plan.

We call this a monthly convening a “stretch meeting.” It is a crucial touch point for keeping the work plan alive and to continually *stretch* performance as a team.

Using internet with web cams can be ideal for these meetings, depending on where everyone is located. You won’t need much more than one hour.

The catalyst leaders will meet prior to each stretch meeting to prepare, and afterwards to debrief. They will structure your sessions to assure *ongoing creative thinking, clear communications, intention tracking, and steady progress*. The catalyst leaders will coach the team to embody your shared vision and become more like it every day.

What else will be gained? Just this:

As an organization you will quickly achieve greater accountability and capacity for coordinated action. You will discover more co-leaders attending to [the 4P’s](#) – the people, process, product and possibilities of your work. Daily priorities will align with long term vision. You will develop a deeper bench of leaders. Your team will move together as one and meet your goals.

SEED specializes in internet coaching for catalyst leaders. To explore: possibilities@seedimpact.org.

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