

## Launch into the New Year with a Plan!

January is a great time for planning. Set aside time to discuss and plan for the new year with your board and key volunteers. Collectively evaluate and decide what your organization will look like at year's end if you are successful in addressing the challenges and opportunities facing your group. This is also the perfect opportunity to revisit your organization's mission, vision, and plans for growth, and make any necessary adjustments so that everyone is aligned.

### Six Tips for Success

#### 1. Complete a SWOT Analysis

If you haven't run a SWOT (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, **T**hreats) analysis recently, now is the time! It is a simple exercise to complete with your board. Even better, do a board self-assessment and really get the conversation flowing!

#### 2. Determine Your Top Priority

Identify the number one problem you're trying to solve for your organization. If you can answer this question, you're off to a great start. You may think it's obvious but see if you can achieve consensus among the group.

#### 3. Review Last Year's Goals

Before setting new goals, revisit last year's goals to make sure you've checked off everything you wanted to accomplish. Didn't get all of them done? Don't worry! Roll them forward into your new yearly plan, but only if they're still relevant.

#### 4. Be Realistic & Measurable

Set the bar high, yet be realistic. Create measurable goals with clear objectives and accountability. Be sure to base these on a thorough assessment and evaluation of outcomes versus emotions.

#### 5. Think about Execution before You Start

It doesn't matter how good the plan is if it isn't executed. Implementation is the phase that turns strategies and plans into actions in order to accomplish your goals and objectives. The critical action steps move a plan from a document that sits on the shelf to actions that drive the growth and sustainability of your organization.

#### 6. Have Fun!

If your board groans when they hear it's time to do planning, shift that mindset by making it fun. This means shaping the process so that participants can be actively engaged. Try integrating some ice-breakers and interactive exercises your planning session.

The start of a new year is a great time to take stock of where your nonprofit organization currently stands and to turn your attention to the future. Taking time to plan now will generate dividends as you progress through the year. Good luck!