

# GEORGIA COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT CENTER



## COOPERATIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

The GCDC can provide a complete training package to allow a cooperative to develop begin the strategic planning process. Individual components of the package can be presented individually (goal setting, SWOT, etc.). The complete workshop is designed for a two day session. Individual sessions range from one to two hours each. (See attached Agenda)

Strategic planning is a management tool, period. As with any management tool, it is used to help a cooperative do a better job by:

- o helping to focus its energy,
- o ensuring that members of the cooperative are working toward the same goals,
- o assessing and adjusting the cooperative's direction in response to a changing environment.

In short, strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what a cooperative is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future.

A word by word dissection of this definition provides the key elements that underlie the meaning and success of a strategic planning process:

- o The process is strategic because it involves preparing the best way to respond to the circumstances of the cooperative's environment, whether or not its circumstances are known in advance; cooperatives often must respond to dynamic and even hostile environments. Being strategic, then, means being clear about the cooperative's objectives, being aware of the cooperative's resources, and incorporating both into being consciously responsive to a dynamic environment.
- o The process is about planning because it involves intentionally setting goals (i.e., choosing a desired future) and developing an approach to achieving those goals.
- o The process is disciplined in that it calls for a certain order and pattern to keep it focused and productive. The process raises a sequence of questions that helps planners examine experience, test assumptions, gather and incorporate information about the present, and anticipate the environment in which the cooperative will be working in the future.
- o Finally, the process is about fundamental decisions and actions because choices

must be made in order to answer the sequence of questions mentioned above. **The plan is ultimately no more, and no less, than a set of decisions about what to do, why to do it, and how to do it.** Because it is impossible to do everything that needs to be done in this world, strategic planning implies that some organizational decisions and actions are more important than others - and that **much of the strategy lies in making the tough decisions about what is most important to achieving organizational success.**

Strategic plans are not an architect's blueprint that must be followed exactly to achieve the desired result. They are road maps that offer a general destination rather than a specific course, with freedom to adjust the plan along the way.

Before a cooperative can outline future directions, strategic planning participants must arrive at consensus about the cooperatives mission, needs and resources. Strategic planning can be characterized as the intersection of these three things. The mission explains why a cooperative exists and what it intends to accomplish. The needs of the customers, not the needs of the cooperatives governing body, should be the primary concern. Identifying internal and external resources helps define the tools available to accomplish goals. Strategic planning can also help identify new resources, especially those that partnerships offer.

The strategic planning process can be complex, challenging, and even messy, but it is always defined by the basic ideas outlined above - and you can always return to these basics for insight into your own strategic planning process.

## TYPICAL AGENDA--STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION

### DAY 1

- A. 15 min Introductions and Expectations (Desired Outcomes) & Ground Rules.
- B. 30 min Visioning: Small groups "draw a picture" of success and develop a metaphor for XXXX Cooperative: "XXXX Cooperative is like..."
- C. 15 min Share pictures of success.
- D. 30 min External Environment: Look at emerging trends which need to be acknowledged and incorporated into the plan.
- E. 30 min Identify STAKEHOLDERS in XXXX Cooperative's external environment.
- F. 30 min Internal Environment: what do we have/what does our organization look-like today?

### LUNCH

- G. 30 min Values: What are XXXX Cooperative' s organizational values?
- H. 30 min Underlying Assumptions: Based on the most important values, what assumptions do we make?
- I. 30 min Mission Statement. Develop "draft" mission statement based on all work done so far.
- J. 30 min Brainstorm and Prioritize SWOT in Small Groups: (S)trengths, (W)eaknesses, (O)pportunities, (T)hreats
- K. 30 min Strategic Issues. Individuals develop.
- L. 15 min Categorize and Prioritize a List of Strategic Issues.
- M. 15 min Develop TOP ISSUES

**TOTAL: 5.5 hours for first day** (does not include breaks or meals)

### 2nd Day

- 15 min Introduction of XXXX Cooperative/Review of Previous Planning Work
  - N. 30 min Goals. Individuals develop.
  - O. 60 min Discuss Goals in Small Groups.
  - P. 30 min Develop TOP TWO OR THREE GOALS.
  - Q. 60 min. Action/Evaluation Plan that will assure the achievement of your goals.
- LUNCH

- R. 30 min. Small groups share plans with larger group.
- S. 30 min. **NEXT STEPS**
- T. 15 min. Evaluation of Strategic Planning Process

**TOTAL: 4.5 hours for second day**