

Nonprofit organizations impacting complex social issues need a strategy planning approach which effectively addresses the continuously changing context in which it works.

This means effective strategy planning needs to *align an organization's vision, mission, and strategic goals*, yet pro-actively include a *process by which the strategy plan can be adapted* as the context changes. We specialize in helping organizations create an *adaptive strategy plan* that allows them to chart a clear course and yet, when needed, to nimbly and thoughtfully adapt the plan to remain competitive, relevant, and effective.

Adaptive Strategy Planning Values

There are three values that inform our approach to strategy planning.

1. ***Adaptive strategy planning can be done quickly with quality.*** Strategy planning provides a "snapshot" in time of where an organization has been and where it is going. "Snapshot" scenes always change immediately after the picture has been taken. Therefore, long, drawn-out "strategic planning" processes often falter because the environmental variables affecting the plan change significantly between planning sessions. Also, this kind of approach often frustrates people and wears them out. Our adaptive strategy planning is a tailored process that supports quick, high quality strategy planning.
2. ***Adaptive strategy planning needs to focus on doing more of what is already being done well.*** For this reason, we take an appreciative approach to strategy planning, typically using tools and elements of Appreciative Inquiry in facilitating planning sessions. Yes, we know there are

weaknesses, threats, challenges, and problems in any organization. We also know that focusing on these does not usually produce any positive actions for the organization to take. Our appreciative process helps organizations identify what is working well already and to do more of it. It also helps organizations generate new energy and ideas for addressing the threats that hold them back from success.

3. ***Adaptive strategy planning has to include a plan for rapidly, thoughtfully adjusting the plan when needed.*** Our process balances the need for establishing a three to five year long-range plan with giving the organization the tools, process, and permission to monitor and to make necessary mid-course adjustments on its own. We think of adaptive strategy planning is a lot like using a GPS in a car. The driver identifies the destination (vision and mission) and the GPS produces an overview map of how to get to the destination (strategy). Once the driver accepts the route, turn-by-turn directions appear. When the driver goes off course, the GPS will make a mid-course correction and provide a new strategy (map) for getting to the final destination. A good strategy plan anticipates and supports a mid-course correction...or two...or three.

The Adaptive Strategy Planning Process

Our adaptive strategy planning process engages, at a minimum, the governing body (aka, board of directors) and the executive leadership of the organization. When time and resources allow, we recommend that other stakeholders (e.g., organizational staff, funders, organizational partners, clients, community members, etc.) participate as well. For example, context assessment (see below) benefits from having "many

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eyes" on the issues affecting the organization, hence, participation of other stakeholders in this step can be invaluable.

Adaptive strategy planning typically includes four stages: 1) context assessment; 2) data review and analysis; 3) a facilitated adaptive strategy planning meeting; and 4) plan drafting and approval. *Each step, described as it is recommended to be performed, is listed in the chart below.*

Each step can be adapted to accommodate an organization's planning budget. It should be noted, though, that significantly adapting, or even eliminating, steps can affect the quality of the strategy plan. Our adaptive strategy planning approach means an organization can have a new strategy plan in approximately 90 to 105 days or less, from start to finish. The total number of hours will range from approximately 63 to 166, depending on the variables described in the chart below. We will tailor the process to your organization's needs. Once a specific adaptive strategy planning process is defined for your organization, we will provide a cost estimate.

Benefits to Adaptive Strategy Planning

Adaptive strategy planning has several benefits for your organization.

- It is **adaptable**...we will teach your organization how to add or amend strategies and how to align them with your long term vision and mission.
- It is **brief**...an adaptive strategy plan is only a few pages and it certainly does not require a separate notebook, eliminating the temptation to put it on the shelf to gather dust with its predecessors.
- It is **"living"**...we will teach organizational leadership (board or governance body and executive leaders) how to use the adaptive strategy plan to monitor the organization's progress toward its goals and how to use the information in the plan to inform future strategic decisions.
- It gives **tools**...to help organizational leaders provide ongoing guidance and direction including, but not limited to, an understanding of the organization's competitive advantage, an organizational identity statement, and a strategy screen to assist in decision making.
- It is **life giving**...it breathes new life into the process of strategy planning for participants...resulting in greater creativity, revitalized energy to work together, and renewed passion for the cause.
- It is **quick**...the whole process can be completed in about 90 days, avoiding a long, drawn-out process that exhausts the energy and patience of board and staff alike.

Additional Billable Services

- **Living Strategy Plan Coaching:** In the facilitated adaptive strategy planning meeting we will provide basic instructions and recommendations for how to monitor the adaptive strategy plan and make the adjustments to it in a timely manner as needed. We are also available, at additional cost, to provide on-site "coaching" to the board or governing body during meetings in which it needs assistance to monitor and adapt the plan.
- **Roles, Responsibility, and Collaborative Leadership Training (aka Board & Leadership Development):** The best strategy plans can fail if they are not executed properly. Execution of the plan can be affected by the ability of the executive leadership and board or governing body to work in partnership. Often role and responsibility confusion can lead to a breakdown in the collaborative relationship. We can help your board or governing body and your executive leadership be more effective as partners by helping them clarify their roles and embrace their responsibilities.

Four Stages of Adaptive Strategy Planning

Stage	Purpose	What Is Involved?	Estimated Length of Time	Billable Hours
<i>Context Assessment¹</i>	To identify the most important variables in the organization's context or environment that will affect the plan and process.	Organizational stakeholders complete a brief, qualitative online survey. "Stakeholders" include board and staff members, and may include funders, clients, and others.	1 month from start to finish is optimal. Stakeholders typically have two to four weeks to complete the online survey.	5 to 15 hours (impacted by planning meetings, survey development/tailoring, the number of stakeholders, and the responsiveness of survey participants)
<i>Data Review and Analysis</i>	To create awareness among the planners of the context variables informing the plan and process.	Those who are tasked with strategy planning will receive a summary of the survey results to read and study prior to the planning meeting.	2 weeks. Planners will have at least two weeks to consider the findings.	1 to 3 hours to generate a summary and distribute via email
<i>Facilitated Adaptive Strategy Planning Meeting</i>	To identify and align the organization's strategy vision, mission, and goals.	A facilitated meeting with organization's planners, typically, board and staff. This meeting focuses on identifying the strategic vision, mission, and goals as these are usually the components that are board responsibilities in strategy planning.	Ideally, a 2 day meeting. Can be done in 1 day but it is not advised. (A "day" is 6-8 working hours, but not including breaks or meals.)	32 to 48 hours (includes facilitator preparation time and up to two 8 hour planning meeting days)
<i>Strategy Plan Drafting and Approval</i>	To create a written plan for final approval and adoption	We will write the first draft of the strategy plan in collaboration with the organization's leadership. The operational plan, that implements the strategy plan, will be developed by the organization's staff upon board approval of the strategy plan.	60 days. Our goal is to work with the organization's leadership to have a final and approved written plan within 60 days of the planning meeting.	25 to 100 hours (determined by number of revisions of first draft; timeliness of collaboration meetings with organizational leadership; and necessity of additional research to complete plan.

¹ In some cases, an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) can be useful in assessing the context of the organization. When it seems an appropriate fit for an organization, we may recommend using AI in addition to or in place of a survey based assessment.

About Your Facilitator



Tom Klaus, PhD is a Maryland-based nonprofit consultant, speaker, trainer, writer, and and writer whose personal mission is to bring hope and caring to the world through the nonprofit sector. In addition to his consulting practice, he is a Certified Appreciative Inquiry facilitator, a Thought Leader with Tamarack Institute, a Canadian social change organization, and an adjunct professor at Eastern University (Philadelphia) in the MBA in Economic Development and PhD in Organizational Leadership program. In these programs, Tom teaches, respectively, “Managing for Optimal Performance” and “Collaborative Leadership and Partnership.”

Tom specializes in senior leadership, nonprofit board, program, and organizational development as well as research and evaluation. His clients include local, statewide, regional, national, and international organizations. He has extensive experience with community engagement and mobilization, intractable controversy management, nonprofit board development and strategy planning, and the management of government funded health and human services grants and projects that are national in scope.

In 2016, working with Dr. Ed Saunders, a colleague at the University of Iowa, he finalized and introduced the Tenacious Change Approach (formerly known as the *Roots to Fruit of Sustainable Community Change* (R2F) model), published in the peer-reviewed journal, *Community Development*. The Tenacious Change Approach features a measurable approach to creating enduring community change on social issues through the integration of the collective impact framework with community development theory, principles, and practice. In September, 2016 Tom's work on the Tenacious Change Approach resulted in an invitation to the White House to meet with Promise Zone leaders from across the United States.

He is also the author, with Liz Weaver (Co-CEO of the Tamarack Institute), of a forthcoming chapter, in a book from the *Community Development Society*, on emerging models for the use of collective impact in community development. The chapter highlights the [Tenacious Change Approach](#), which is being formally introduced in the United States through Tenacious Change, LLC. It has been introduced internationally in Canada at the Tamarack Institute's Collective Impact Summit and Community Change Institute and through the 17th Annual Global Conference of the International Leadership Association in Barcelona, Spain.

Tom has earned degrees from William Penn University and Drake University in Iowa, and his doctor of philosophy in (nonprofit) organizational leadership, from Eastern University in Philadelphia.