



Why Strategic Planning Is More Important Than Ever

*Usually, the main problem with life conundrums
is that we don't bring to them enough imagination.*

—Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul*

Leaders and managers of governments, public agencies of all sorts, non-profit organizations, and communities face numerous and difficult challenges. Consider, for example, the dizzying number of trends and events affecting the United States in the past two decades: we have experienced an aging and diversifying population; extensive immigration and geographic shifts in population; the changing nature of families; huge bubbles in housing and stock markets followed by long bear markets and recessions; an apparent conservative political shift in electoral politics, coupled with major support among the populace for education and health care reform; tax cuts, levy limits, and indexing at the same time the federal government and most states are facing unprecedented debt; dramatic shifts in federal and state responsibilities and funding priorities; first a closing of the gap between the rich and poor, and then a reopening of the gap; the emergence of children as the largest group of poor Americans; dramatic growth in the use of information technology, e-commerce, and e-government; the changing nature of work and a redefinition of careers; fears about international terrorism; and even the emergence of obesity as an important public health concern, as the United States is by far the most obese country in the world. Perhaps most ominous, we have experienced a dramatic decline in social capital in recent decades, especially among the less educated and less well off. Social capital, defined as goodwill, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse, is a crucial factor in building and maintaining personal and family physical and mental health and strong

communities. The 2008 presidential campaign notwithstanding, the younger generation in general is not very interested in politics, not very trustful of politicians or others, cynical about public affairs, and less inclined to participate in enduring social organizations, such as unions, political parties, or churches (Putnam, 2000; Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen, 2004). Beyond that, in spite of economic growth, citizens in the United States and other developed countries appear to be no more happy now than they were thirty years ago (Eaton & Eswaran, 2009; Veenhoven, 2009).

Not surprisingly, we have seen sustained attention paid to questions of government and nonprofit organizational design, management, performance, and accountability as part of the process of addressing these and other concerns. Indeed, in the public sector *change*—though not necessarily dramatic or rapid change—*is the rule, rather than the exception* (Light, 1997, 2000; Kettl, 2002).

Globally, the spread of democracy and a beneficent capitalism seemed almost inevitable after the collapse of the Soviet Union some twenty years ago (Schwartz, Leyden, & Hyatt, 1999; Giddens, 2002). Although democracy has spread, progress seems far more uneven (Huntington, 1998). Thomas Friedman has argued that the world is becoming “flatter” as a result of globalization (Friedman, 2000, 2007); Richard Florida (2007), in contrast, argues that the world continues to be very “spiky,” with many peaks and valleys. Can both be right? In some ways, yes—but across the board, probably not. In 2009, twenty years after the adoption of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, somewhat under *nine million* children under the age of five died worldwide of causes mostly preventable by inexpensive means, such as clean water, immunization, or access to generic drugs. The number of deaths is a big improvement over the 12.5 million under-fives who died in 1990, but there are still almost 25,000 mostly needless child deaths *every day* (UNICEF, 2007, p. 15.). The World Bank (2011) estimates that in 2005 something like 2.6 billion people subsisted on less than two dollars a day (although the fraction of people living at that level had declined from 1981 from 70 percent to 48 percent). Using that criterion of two dollars per day, most readers of this book are astronomically wealthy. Feiock, Moon, and Park (2008) conclude that the landscape is indeed spiky, and that active governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations working together, especially on a regional scale, are needed to help communities stay out of the valleys.

Beyond that, most Western nations and many others face a scenario of low growth for perhaps a decade, as the excesses of the “noughties” (as the British call the first decade of the twenty-first century) and costs of the 2007–2009 global recession work themselves out. (In a somewhat parallel way, the third edition of this book was written in the wake of the 2000 stock market collapse, subsequent recession, and long bear market following the bursting of the 1990s

“dot-com” frenzy; history may not repeat itself, but as Mark Twain noted, it rhymes a lot.) It is clearly possible that Japan might once again be the low growth, deflationary “model” for the future, as it was in a very different way in the 1980s when its economic and business prowess were the envy of all. Dictators—even tyrants—still abound; concerns about huge labor migrations, dislocations, and exploitation persist in the United States, European Union, China, and elsewhere; unemployment rates are high in many, perhaps most, developed and developing countries; awful catastrophes involving earthquakes, tsunamis, and epidemics occur all too frequently; many of the world’s forest and fish stocks are depleted; and so on. As noted, poverty and ill health are far too widespread, even when some of the worst effects of ill health might be removed for literally pennies per person per day. Global environmental change shows up in hotter average temperatures, changed rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, an increasing number of catastrophic storms, and increased skin cancer rates. The Worldwatch Institute claims in *State of the World 2010* that worldwide consumerism has put us on a collision course with environmental disaster. Terrorism in several parts of the globe is real and deeply threatening, and must be countered, if democracy, sane and sustainable economic growth, and peaceful conflict management are to occur. The United States has been involved in extraordinarily expensive wars of unclear benefit in Iraq and Afghanistan. The first was undertaken under demonstrably false pretenses and, though it has brought democracy of a sort to Iraq, has also cost upwards of 500,000 civilian deaths as a consequence of criminally negligent planning for the occupation (Rieff, 2003; Allawi, 2008). And Sir Martin Rees, a renowned astrophysicist and the British royal astronomer, guesses that the world has only a 50–50 chance of escaping a devastating global catastrophe of some kind sometime in this century (Rees, 2003).

So do I have your attention? Organizations that want to survive, prosper, and do good and important work must respond to the challenges the world presents. Their response may be to do what they have always done, only better; but they may also need to shift their focus and strategies. Although organizations typically experience long periods of relative stability when change is incremental, they also typically encounter periods of dramatic and rapid change (Gersick, 1991; Baumgartner & Jones, 2009; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 2009). These periods of organizational change may be exciting, but they also can be anxiety producing—or even terrifying. As geologist Derek V. Ager notes, “The history of any one part of the earth . . . consists of long periods of boredom punctuated by short periods of terror” (Gould, 1980, p. 185). He might as well have been talking about organizational life!

These economic, social, political, technological, environmental, and organizational changes are aggravated by the interconnectedness of the world. Changes anywhere typically result in changes elsewhere, making efficacious

self-directed behavior problematic at best. As Booker Prize-winning novelist Salman Rushdie says, “Most of what matters in your life happens in your absence” (1981, p. 19). More recently, Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Junot Díaz asserts: “It’s never the changes we want that change everything” (2008, p. 51). Only if you are lucky are the changes for the better and often “the best things in life happen when you don’t get what you think you want” (Bakewell, 2010, p. 333).

This increasing interconnectedness is perhaps most apparent in the blurring of three traditionally important distinctions—between domestic and international spheres; between policy areas; and between public, private, and nonprofit sectors (Cleveland, 2002; Kettl, 2002, 2008). These changes have become dramatically apparent since the mid-1970s. The U.S. economy is now intimately integrated with the economies of the rest of the world, and events abroad have domestic repercussions. My wife and I own an American-made car—a Toyota Camry. The Chinese government is both keeping the United States afloat by buying our debt, and causing trouble with its undervalued currency for U.S. manufacturing and other industries, and to our balance of payments. It is hard to see how long this bilateral system can be sustained—because it simply is unsustainable in the long run. When I was growing up, the Soviet Union was the enemy; now the Evil Empire, as President Ronald Reagan called it, does not exist, and my young Eastern European students don’t have much knowledge of it. The current Russian Federation is an ally on many fronts, but clearly problematic, just as Russia was in World War II. Threats to U.S. oil and natural gas supplies from abroad prompt meetings in, and actions by, the White House, intelligence agencies, and Departments of State, Defense, and Homeland Security. And the Middle East remains a powder keg affecting interests across the globe.

Distinctions between policy areas are also hard to maintain. For example, both educational policy and arts or cultural policy are seen as a type of economic development and industrial policy to help communities and firms compete more effectively. Strengthening the economy will not eliminate government human service and Social Security costs, but letting it falter will certainly increase them. Physical education programs, educational programs promoting healthy lifestyles, and parks and recreation budgets are viewed as a way of controlling health care costs.

Finally, the boundaries between public, private, and nonprofit sectors have eroded. National sovereignty has “leaked up” to multinational corporations, international organizations, and international alliances. Sovereignty has “leaked out” to businesses and nonprofit organizations. Taxes are not collected by government tax collectors but are withheld by private and nonprofit organizations from their employees and turned over to the government. The nation’s health, education, and welfare are rightly seen as public—and not just

government—responsibilities, and we increasingly rely on private and non-profit organizations and associations for the production and coproduction of services in these areas. Weapons systems are not produced in government arsenals but by private industry. When such fundamental public functions as tax collection; health, education, and welfare; and weapons production are handled by private and nonprofit organizations, then surely the boundaries between public, private, and nonprofit organizations are irretrievably blurred. But beyond that, sovereignty has also “leaked down,” as state and local governments have been the big gainers in power in the last fifteen years, and the federal government the big loser. As the second decade of the twenty-first century begins, the federal government is quite frequently the *last* resort when it comes to dealing with the most complex social and economic problems. (The Treasury and the Federal Reserve Bank really were the last resort in avoiding a depression as a result of the 2007–2009 financial crisis, but now the resulting massive federal debt makes federal responses to important challenges perhaps no less needed, but even harder to sell.) State and local governments now are typically more important as the problem solvers, even though they often lack the knowledge, resources, legitimacy, and political will to do so effectively. The result of this “leakage” of sovereignty up, out, and down, and the irretrievable blurring of boundaries between public, private, and nonprofit sectors, is the creation of what Brinton Milward and his colleagues call “the hollow state,” in which government is simply an actor—and not necessarily the most important actor—in the networks we rely on to do the public’s work (Milward & Provan, 2000; Frederickson & Frederickson, 2006).

The blurring of these boundaries means that we have moved to a world in which no one organization or institution is fully in charge, and yet many are involved, affected, or have a partial responsibility to act (Cleveland, 2002; Kettl, 2002, 2008; Crosby & Bryson, 2005). This increased jurisdictional ambiguity—coupled with the events and trends noted previously—requires public and nonprofit organizations (and collaborations and communities) to think, act, and learn strategically as never before. Strategic planning is designed to help them do so. The extensive experience of public, nonprofit, and private organizations with strategic planning in recent decades offers a fund of research and advice on which we will draw throughout this book.

DEFINITION, PURPOSE, AND BENEFITS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

What is strategic planning? Drawing in part on the work of Olsen and Eadie (1982, p. 4), I define strategic planning as a *deliberative, disciplined approach*

to producing fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why. Strategic planning may be thought of as a “way of knowing” intended to help leaders and managers discern what to do, how, and why (Bryson, Crosby, & Bryson, 2009). Strategic planning of this kind can help leaders and managers successfully address major issues or challenges facing an organization (or some other entity), by which I mean issues or challenges not amenable to simple technical fixes. As noted in the Preface, deliberative strategic planning can be helpful for purposes of: (1) gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing information to consider its strategic significance and frame possible choices; (2) producing considered judgments among key decision makers about desirable, feasible, defensible, and acceptable missions, goals, strategies, and actions, along with complementary initiatives, such as new, changed, or terminated policies, programs, and projects, or even overall organizational designs; (3) addressing in effective ways key organizational issues or challenges now and in the foreseeable future; (4) enhancing continuous organizational learning; and (5) creating significant and enduring public value. As experience with this kind of deliberative approach has grown, a substantial and expanding inventory of knowledge, concepts, procedures, tools, and techniques has also developed to assist leaders and managers in their deliberations. Much of that inventory is highlighted in this book.

As a deliberative approach, strategic planning must attend to the design and use of the settings within which constructive deliberation is most likely to occur (Crosby & Bryson, 2005, pp. 401–426). First and foremost, these settings include formal and informal forums linking speakers and audiences in order to create and communicate meaning and foster learning (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2009). In addition, formal and informal arenas—in which legislative, executive, and administrative decisions are made—and formal and informal courts—where underlying laws and norms are reinforced or modified, and residual conflicts left over from policymaking or executive decisions are managed—must be designed and used. The most important court is probably the court of public opinion. Of the three types of characteristic settings, forums are the most amenable to design, in contrast to formal arenas and courts, which often are quite rigidly structured. Fortunately, however, in my experience forums are the most important kinds of settings, because they are where meaning is created and communicated—meaning that is extraordinarily consequential for shaping what follows, including what gets considered in arenas and courts.

In each of these settings for deliberation, participants must take into account the “deliberative pathways” that are possible and available for use as part of mutual efforts at persuasion. The term was coined by Bryan Garsten (2006, p. 131) to describe Aristotle’s sense of “the landscape of thoughts and patterns” that might exist in an audience, and thus “the pathways” that might exist from

one belief to another. These pathways are the starting point for understanding how mutual understanding, learning, and judgment might proceed. The pathways will influence a listener's beliefs via the structure and logic of an argument (*logos*), trust in the judgment and goodwill of the speaker (*ethos*), or because he or she felt moved by an emotion (*pathos*) (Garsten, 2006).

Strategic planning approached as the design and use of settings for deliberation must include an awareness of the features of effective deliberation, including the deliberative pathways that might be available for use. In other words, the overall process of designing a pathway (or process) for deliberation must take into account the deliberative pathways already existing within audiences' heads. Other features of effective deliberation include: speakers and audiences; information gathering, analysis, and synthesis; the development and framing of choices; the development of persuasive arguments; judgment; intellect and emotion; reasonable objectivity, but also partiality and passion; at times transparency and publicity, and at other times secrecy, so that people can develop and consider the full range of options, including the "unthinkable" or "unspeakable"; and at all times listening and respecting what others say, at least until final choices are made (Garsten, 2006, pp. 127–179, 131, 191–194). The basic form of a reasonable statement is to make a claim because of reasons based on evidence. Deliberation occurs in situations requiring choice; the basic form of a deliberative statement is *choice* based on *reasons* in order to *achieve ends* (Barzelay, 2009; see also Simons, 2001, pp. 155–178; Dunn, 2004, pp. 89–134). This honorable tradition of reasonable deliberation goes back at least to Aristotle and Cicero, both of whom analyzed and promoted its virtues.

But to succeed, deliberative processes and practices also need institutional and organizational arrangements in place to support them. Cicero in particular emphasized this point, as one would expect. He may have been Rome's greatest orator—whose oratory once saved the Republic from a coup, thereby earning himself the Senate's accolade of *pater patriae*, "father of his country"—but he also faced more than one angry mob and the likes of Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, and their armies. He endured exile and in the end had his throat slit by one of Mark Antony's henchmen (Everitt, 2003; Freeman, 2008). Deliberation certainly should be a part of politics, but its constructive role must be supported and protected or the politics can get very nasty indeed!

The deliberative tradition requires a willingness on the part of would-be deliberators to: resist rushing to judgment; tolerate uncertainty, ambiguity, and equivocality; consider different views and new information; and be persuaded—but also a willingness to end deliberations at some point and go with the group's considered judgment. The deliberative tradition doesn't presume that there is a "correct" solution or "one best answer" to addressing major challenges, only that there is wisdom to be found via the process (Stone, 2002). Many find the lack of definitiveness in deliberation frustrating. It takes time

to build and maintain an appreciative audience for deliberation—as with poetry, classical music, and jazz.

In short, at its best, strategic planning requires deliberation informed by broadscale yet effective information gathering, analysis, and synthesis; clarification of the mission and goals to be pursued and issues to be addressed along the way; development and exploration of, and choice among, strategic alternatives; and an emphasis on the future implications of present decisions. Strategic planning can help facilitate communication, participation, and judgment; accommodate divergent interests and values, foster wise decision making informed by reasonable analysis; promote successful implementation and accountability; and enhance ongoing learning. In short, at its best strategic planning can prompt in organizations the kind of imagination—and commitment—that psychotherapist and theologian Thomas Moore thinks are necessary to deal with individuals' life conundrums.

One useful way to think about strategic planning is presented in Figure 1.1. The figure presents a capsule summary of what strategic planning is all about. Necessary richness and detail can be added as needed to this basic understanding. “A” is figuring out, via a deliberative process, where you are, “B” is where you want to go, and “C” is how to get there. Leaders and other process participants come to understand A, B, and C as they formulate, clarify, and resolve strategic issues—the fundamental policy choices or challenges the organization has to face. The content of A and B are the organization's existing or new mission, structure, communications systems, programs and services, people and skills, relationships, budgets, and other supports. The content of C is the strategic plan; plans for various functions; ways to restructure, reengineer, reframe, or repurpose (Scharmer, 2009); budget allocations; and other strategies and vehicles for change. Getting from A to B involves clarifying vision, mission, and goals. Getting from A to C is the process of strategy formulation; getting from B to C is strategy implementation. To do strategic planning well, you need to figure out A, B, and C and how they should be connected as you go along. You accomplish this principally by understanding the issues that A, B, C and their interconnections must address effectively. Think of the arrows as pathways for deliberation that result in the final choices of what is in A, B, and C. The summary also makes it clear that strategic planning is an approach, not a detailed, rigidly sequential, step-by-step, technocratic process. As an approach, it requires effective deliberation—and leadership—and a variety of concepts, activities, procedures, tools, and techniques can contribute to its success.

So that is how strategic planning is defined and briefly what it is. But why engage in strategic planning? At its best, the purpose of strategic planning in the United States and elsewhere is to help public and nonprofit organizations “create public value,” in Mark Moore's compelling and evocative phrase

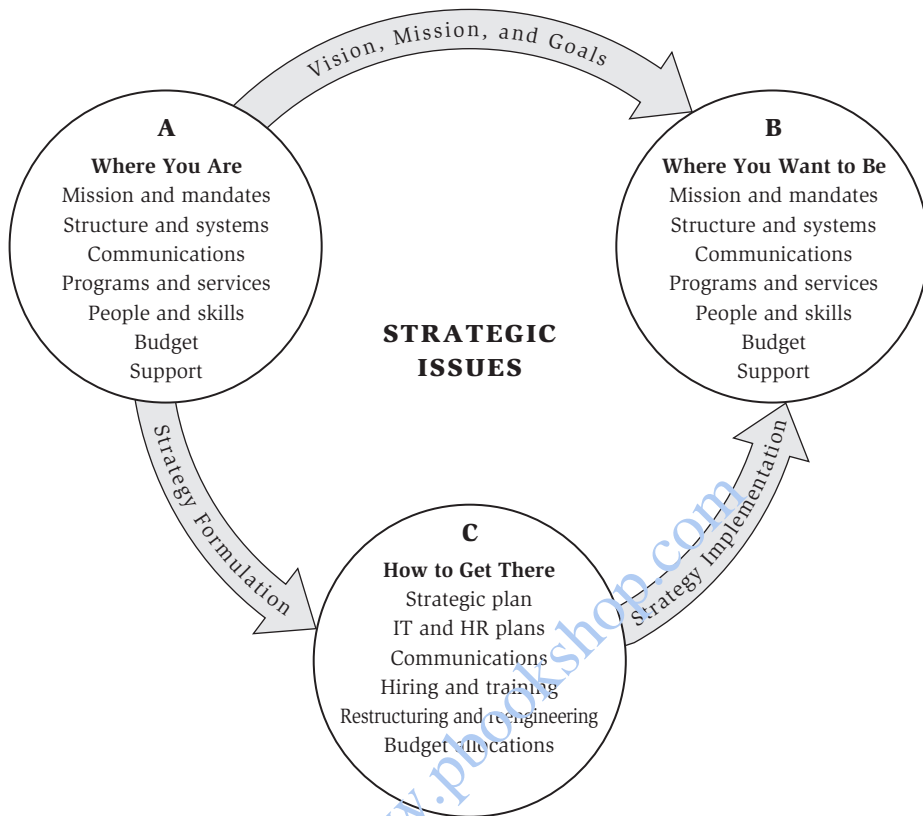


Figure 1.1. The ABCs of Strategic Planning.

Source: Bryson & Alston, 2004.

(Moore, 1995, 2000). Moore discusses creating public value primarily as the responsibility of individual managers, whereas I see creating public value more broadly as an individual, group, organizational, and community responsibility. Creating public value means producing enterprises, policies, programs, projects, services, or physical, technological, social, political, and cultural infrastructure that advance the public interest and the common good at a reasonable cost. At a very general level, in the United States creating public value means enhancing life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all, while also fostering a more perfect union. It means ensuring that the beneficial effects of our institutions and efforts carry on into the indefinite future, and that we change what we must, so that the world is always left better off than we found it. Strategic planning is about listening to “the better angels of our nature,” as Abraham Lincoln called them in his First Inaugural—it is about organizing our best and most noble hopes and dreams, making them reasonable and

actionable, and bringing them to life. In this sense, strategic planning is about “the manufacture of transcendence” (Krieger, 2000) and finds its inspiration in the deepest sources of “the real American Dream” (Delbanco, 1999). Beyond that—in the United States and elsewhere—strategic planning is meant to help its practitioners and beneficiaries “pursue significance” (Denhardt, 1993)—in short, to create significant and enduring public value.

Most of the work on strategic planning has focused on for-profit organizations. Until the early 1980s, strategic planning in the public sector was applied primarily to military strategy and the practice of statecraft on a grand scale (Bracker, 1980). That situation changed, however, with the publication in 1982 of J. B. Olsen and D. C. Eadie’s book, *The Game Plan: Governance with Foresight*, which marks the beginning of sustained applications of strategic planning to the broad range of public organizations, and of scholarship on how best to do so. Strategic planning for nonprofit organizations has proceeded in parallel, with the most important early publication being Barry (1986). I am pleased to say that the first three editions of this book, published in 1988, 1995, and 2004, also played an important role in expanding the use of strategic planning by public and nonprofit organizations.

Experience has clearly demonstrated that strategic planning can be used successfully to help:

- Public agencies, departments, or major organizational divisions (for example, Barzelay & Campbell, 2003)
- General-purpose governments, such as city, county, state, or tribal governments (for example, Kissler, Fore, Jacobson, Kittredge, & Stewart, 1998; Hendrick, 2003)
- Nonprofit organizations providing what are basically public services (for example, Stone, Bigelow, & Crittenden, 1999; Vila & Carnales, 2008)
- Purpose-driven interorganizational networks (such as partnerships, collaborations, and alliances) in the public and nonprofit sectors designed to fulfill specific functions, such as transportation, health, education, or emergency services—that bridge organizational and governmental boundaries (for example, Nelson & French, 2002; Burby, 2003; Innes & Booher, 2010)
- Entire communities, urban or metropolitan areas, regions or states (for example, Chrislip, 2002; Wheeland, 2004)

This book concentrates primarily on strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations, including the collaborations of which they may be a part. It considers applications for communities in lesser detail. (The term *community* is used throughout the book to refer to communities, urban or metropolitan

areas, and regions or states.) Though the process detailed in this book is applicable to all the entities listed above, the specifics of its implementation may differ for each case. When strategic planning is focused on an organization, it is likely that most of the key decision makers will be “insiders”—although considerable relevant information may be gathered from “outsiders.” Certainly this would be true of public agencies, local governments, and non-profit organizations that deliver “public” services. When most of the key decision makers are insiders, it will likely be easier to get people together to decide important matters, reconcile differences, and coordinate implementation activities. (Of course, whether or not the organization’s board of directors or governing body consists of insiders or outsiders may be an open question, particularly if they are publicly elected. For instance, are elected city council members insiders, outsiders, or both? Regardless of the answer, it remains true that typically a major proportion of the key decision makers will be insiders.)

In contrast, when strategic planning is focused on a function—often crossing organizational or governmental boundaries—or on a community, almost all of the key decision makers will be outsiders. In these situations, the focus of attention will be on how to organize collective thinking, action, and learning more or less collaboratively within an interorganizational network or networks where no one person, group, organization, or institution is fully in charge, but in which many are involved, or affected, or have a partial responsibility to act. One should expect that it might be more difficult to organize an effective strategic planning process in such a “shared-power” context. More time probably will need to be spent on organizing forums for discussion, involving various diverse constituencies, negotiating agreements in existing or new arenas, and coordinating the activities and actions of numerous relatively independent people, groups, organizations, and institutions (Bardach, 1998; Burby, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Innes & Booher, 2010).

Organizations engage in strategic planning for many reasons. Proponents of strategic planning typically try to persuade their colleagues with one or more of the following kinds of statements:

- “We face so many conflicting demands we need to figure out what our focus and priorities should be.”
- “The rules are changing on us. We are being told to emphasize measurable outcomes, the competition is stiffer, funding is getting tighter, collaboration is being pushed, and we need to figure out what we do or can do well that fits with the changing picture.”
- “We have gone through total quality management, reinvention and reengineering, downsizing and rightsizing, along with the revolution in information technology. Now people are asking us to take on performance management, balanced scorecards, knowledge

management, and who knows what else? How can we make sure all of this effort is headed in the right direction?”

- “We can expect a severe budget deficit next year and the public will suffer unless we drastically rethink the way we do business. Somehow we need to figure out how to do more with less through better integration of our activities, finances, human resources, and information technology.”
- “Our city is changing and in spite of our best efforts, things do not seem to be getting better.”
- “Issue X is staring us in the face and we need some way to help us think about its resolution, or else we will be badly hurt.”
- “We need to integrate or coordinate better the services we provide with those of other organizations. Right now things are just too fragmented and poorly resourced and our clients needing more than one service are suffering.”
- “Our funders (or board of directors, or new chief executive) have asked us to prepare a strategic plan.”
- “We know a leadership change is coming and want to prepare for it.”
- “We want to use strategic planning to educate, involve, and revitalize our board and staff.”
- “Our organization has an embarrassment of riches, but we still need to figure out how we can have the biggest impact; we owe it to our stakeholders.”
- “Everyone is doing strategic planning these days; we’d better do it, too.”

Regardless of why public and nonprofit organizations engage in strategic planning, however, similar *benefits* are likely to result. Many authors argue that strategic planning can produce a number of benefits for organizations (for example, Nutt & Backoff, 1992; Barry, 1997; Nutt, 2002). The first and perhaps most obvious potential benefit is the *promotion of strategic thinking, acting, and learning*, especially through “strategic conversation” and deliberation among key actors (Van der Heijden, 2005). Let me define these terms. The *Oxford Reference Dictionary* (Hawkins, 1986, p. 855, defines *thinking* as meaning “(1) to exercise the mind in an active way, to form connected ideas, (2) to have as an idea or opinion, (3) to form as an intention or plan, (4) to take into consideration, or (5) to call to mind, to remember.” In keeping with the spirit of this definition, I define *strategic thinking* as thinking in context about how to pursue purposes or achieve goals. This also includes thinking

about what the context is and how it might or should be changed; what the purposes are or should be; and what capabilities or competencies will or might be needed, and how they might be used, to achieve the purposes. *Strategic acting* is acting in context in light of future consequences to achieve purposes and/or to facilitate learning. And drawing in part on Simon (1996, p. 100), I define *strategic learning* as any change in a system that by better adapting it to its environment produces a more or less permanent change in its capacity to pursue its purposes. The learning thus is focused pragmatically on what works, which likely includes knowing something about what doesn't. Learning of this sort doesn't have to be by design; much of it will be tacit and epiphenomenal (Bryson, 2010a; Vila & Carnales, 2008). In short, strategic planning is an approach to facilitate these kinds of thinking, acting, and learning.

Strategic thinking, acting, and learning are promoted by more systematic information gathering about the organization's external and internal environment and various actors' interests, thoughtful examination of the organization's successes and failures, clarification of future direction, establishment of organizational priorities for action, and in general attention to the acquisition and use of productive knowledge and skills. For many organizations, "strategic planning has become a natural part of doing business"—the regular deliberations about key concerns are a central feature of "moving the organization forward and increasing its effectiveness" (Sarry, 1997, p. 10). In short, strategic planning can be used to help organize and manage effective organizational change processes in which the best is kept, while the organization figures out what to change.

The second benefit is *improved decision making*. Improved decision making is really crucial, since recent studies have indicated that at least half of all strategic decisions fail as a result of poor decision-making processes (Nutt, 2002)! Strategic planning helps because it focuses attention on the crucial issues and challenges the organization faces, and it helps key decision makers figure out what they should do about them. It can help them make today's decisions in light of their future consequences. It can help them develop a coherent and defensible basis for decision making and then coordinate implementing the resulting decisions across levels and functions. It can help them exercise maximum discretion in the areas under their organization's control, and influence actions and outcomes in those areas that are not. Strategic planning thus can help organizations formulate and clearly communicate their strategic directions and intentions to relevant audiences, and also act on those intentions.

The third benefit is *enhanced organizational effectiveness, responsiveness, and resilience*, which flow from the first two. Organizations engaging in strategic planning are encouraged to clarify and address major organizational issues, respond wisely to internal and external demands and pressures

(including those for accountability), and deal effectively with rapidly changing circumstances. They are encouraged, in other words, to be well managed. And while it almost sounds tautological to say so, it clearly is not: The evidence is fairly clear that organizations that are managed well and are relatively stable perform better, are appropriately responsive to external demands, are innovative in effective ways, have greater influence, are more accountable, and are more resilient than organizations that are not managed well (Light, 1998, 2000; O'Toole & Meier, 2003; Cogburn & Schneider, 2003; Boyne & Gould-Williams, 2003; Meier & O'Toole, 2009). Good management helps create good organizational systems and response repertoires; in other words, good management is a process that draws on resources of many kinds to produce the outputs and outcomes that indicate organizational effectiveness, and that trigger the resource flows the organization needs to sustain itself and continue to create public value into the future (Bryson, Gibbons, & Shaye, 2001). Porter (1985, pp. 33–61) refers to this linkage of inputs, processes, and outputs in firms as a “value chain,” and if the chain does not produce value in the marketplace at reasonable cost, the firm is in danger of going out of business. In the case of public and nonprofit organizations, we can say that the value chain must create public value at reasonable cost, or else serious consequences are likely to ensue. Increasingly, integrated use of human resources, information technology, and financial management are crucial elements of organizing, strengthening, protecting, and sustaining organizational capabilities for creating public value (Bryson, 2003; Heintzman & Marson, 2005).

The fourth benefit is *enhanced organizational legitimacy*. Organizations that satisfy their key stakeholders according to the stakeholders' criteria and that create real public value at reasonable cost have earned the right to exist (Eden & Ackermann, 1998). Said differently, public and nonprofit organizations are externally justified in that they exist to provide real service; those that do, and continue to find ways to do so as circumstances change, typically continue to exist (Holzer, Lee, & Newman, 2003; Hill & Lynn, 2009). These survivors therefore can concentrate on doing better without having to worry quite so much as they otherwise might about having to justify their claims on others' resources (Suchman, 1995).

Fifth, beyond organizational effectiveness, strategic planning can help produce *enhanced effectiveness of broader societal systems*. Most of the public problems we face these days stretch beyond any one organization's boundaries. As Don Schön (1971) pointed out long ago, our big challenges in education, health, employment, poverty, the environment—you name it—typically need to be conceptualized at the supra-organizational or *system* level, not the *organizational* level. Those systems are what really need to work better if our lives and the world are to be made better and broadly based public value is to be created. Organizations can contribute to better functioning of these systems,

but typically must do so in partnership with others or by somehow taking those others into account (Kettl, 2002, 2008; Crosby & Bryson, 2005; Mulgan, 2009). Strategic planning can help organizations take the broader environment into account and can help them figure out how best to partner with other organizations so that they jointly can create better environments (Agranoff, 2007; Crosby & Bryson, 2010). The result probably should be some sort of concerted institutional redesign effort at the system level (for example, Brandl, 1998; Lake, Reis, & Spann, 2000; Bryson & Crosby, 2008) that enhances intellectual, human, and social capital at both the societal and organizational levels (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

Finally, strategic planning can directly *benefit the people involved*. Policymakers and key decision makers can be helped to fulfill their roles and responsibilities, and teamwork and expertise are likely to be built among participants in the process (Kim, 2002). Human, social, political, and intellectual capital can increase. Morale can improve based on task accomplishment. Further, employees or organizations that can create real, demonstrable public value are more likely to have a job in the future. Reduced anxiety may result from a job well done, increased competency, strengthened relationships, and enhanced job prospects.

In short, strategic planning at its best surely must count as a “smart practice,” which Bardach defines as a “method of interacting with a situation that is intended to produce some result; . . . [and] also involves taking advantage of some latent opportunity for creating value on the cheap” (1998, p. 36). Strategic planning is smart, because it is relatively easy to do; is not all that time- and resource-intensive, particularly when matched against the costs of potential failure; seeks out relevant information; makes use of deliberative argumentation, which is an important route to producing wise judgments; and would seem to go hand in hand with the craft of creating public value (Lynn, 1996; Bardach, 1993; Hill & Lynn, 2009). Strategic planning can be a highly cost-effective tool for finding or creating useful ideas for strategic interventions and for figuring out how to organize the participation and coalition needed to adopt the ideas and protect them during implementation (Mulgan, 2009). When not overly formalized, bereft of participation, and obsessed with numbers, strategic planning can make effective use of deliberation to produce enhanced organizational responsiveness, performance, and accountability.

Although strategic planning *can* provide all these benefits, there is *no* guarantee that it will. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that any organization would experience all or even most of the benefits of strategic planning the first time through—or perhaps even after several cycles of strategic planning. For one thing, the process depends on its participants’ willingness to engage in deliberation. In addition, strategic planning must be adapted to its context, even as its purpose may be to change aspects of that context. Leaders, managers, and

planners therefore need to be very careful—and strategic—about how they engage in strategic planning because their success will depend at least in part on how they tailor the process to their situations. This book will present a generic approach to strategic planning for governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations that is based in considerable research and experience. Advice will be offered on how to apply the process in different circumstances. But the process will work only if enough key decision makers and planners support it and use it with common sense and sensitivity to the particulars of their situation. And even then, success is never guaranteed, particularly when very difficult and fraught strategic issues are addressed.

Furthermore, strategic planning is not always advisable (Mintzberg, 1994; Barry, 1997; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 2009). There are two compelling reasons for holding off on a formal strategic planning effort. First, strategic planning may not be the best first step for an organization whose roof has fallen—keeping in mind, of course, that every crisis should be managed strategically (Mitroff & Anagnos, 2005; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). For example, the organization may need to remedy a cash-flow crunch before undertaking strategic planning. Or the organization may need to postpone strategic planning until it fills a key leadership position. Or it could be that showing compassion for people who have faced some sort of disaster is the first order of business (Dutton, Frost, Worline, Lilius, & Kanov, 2002). Second, if the organization lacks the skills, resources, or commitment of key decision makers to engage in deliberative strategic planning, or implementation of the results is extremely unlikely, strategic planning will be a waste of time. Such a situation embodies what Bill Roering and I have called “the paradox of strategic planning”: it is most needed where it is least likely to work, and least needed where it is most likely to work (Bryson & Roering, 1988, 1989). If strategic planning is undertaken in such a situation, it probably should be a focused and limited effort aimed at developing the necessary skills, resources, and commitment.

A number of other reasons also can be offered for not engaging in strategic planning. Too often, however, these “reasons” are actually excuses used to avoid what should be done. For example, one might argue that strategic planning will be of little use if the costs of the process are likely to outweigh any benefits, or the process takes time and money that might be better used elsewhere. These concerns may be justified, but recall that the purpose of strategic planning is to produce fundamental decisions and actions that define what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why it does it. In Chapter Three I will argue that strategic planning probably shouldn’t take more than 10 percent of the ordinary work time available to any key decision maker during a year. When is the cost of that time likely to outweigh the benefit of focusing on the production of fundamental decisions and actions by their organization? In my experience, hardly ever.

Many organizations—particularly small nonprofit organizations—may prefer to rely on the intuition and vision of extremely gifted leaders instead of on formal strategic planning processes. If these leaders are strategically minded and experienced, there may be no need for strategic planning for purposes of developing strategies. It is rare, however, for any leader to have all the information necessary to develop an effective strategy, and rarer still for any strategy developed by a single person to engender the kind of commitment necessary for effective implementation. A reasonably structured and formalized deliberative strategic planning process helps organizations gather and assess the information necessary for effective strategy formulation. It also provides the discipline and commitment necessary to effectively implement strategies.

In addition, many organizations—particularly those that have enormous difficulty reaching decisions that cut across levels, functions, or programs—find that incremental decision making and mutual adjustments of various sorts among interested partisans is the only process that will work. “Muddling through” of this sort, as Charles Lindblom (1959) described it, legitimizes the existing distribution of power and resources in the organization and allows the separate parts of the organization to pursue opportunities as they arise. Interesting and useful innovations may develop that enhance learning and promote useful adaptations to changing circumstances. In fact, if the muddling occurs within a general agreement on overall direction, everyone may be better off (Behn, 1988; Barzelay & Campbell, 2003; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 2009). Unfortunately, muddling typically results in a chronic suboptimization of organizational performance, and key external and internal constituencies therefore may be badly served (Barzelay, 1992; Osborne & Plastrik, 1997; Andrews, Boyne, Law, & Walker, 2009).

Strategic planning also probably should not be undertaken if implementation is extremely unlikely. To engage in strategic planning when effective implementation will not follow is the organizational equivalent of the average New Year’s resolution. On the other hand, when armed with the knowledge that implementation will be difficult, key decision makers and planners can focus extra attention on ensuring implementation success.

Finally, organizations simply may not know how and where to start and stop the process. The good news is that strategic planning actually can begin almost anywhere—the process is so interconnected that you end up covering most phases via conversation and dialogue, no matter where you start.

What Strategic Planning Is Not

Strategic planning clearly is no panacea. As noted, strategic planning is simply a deliberative, disciplined *approach* to helping key decision makers in organizations figure out what they think they should be doing, how, and why. It may not be possible to design or use the needed formal and informal forums,

arenas, and courts; the key decision makers may not participate. Even if they do take part, needed deliberations may not necessarily occur. And if these deliberations do occur, needed actions may not necessarily be taken as a result. There is an available set of concepts, procedures, tools, and practical guidance designed to help leaders, managers, and planners think, act, and learn strategically, but those needed in any particular situation may not be used or used effectively. Indeed, in my experience—in life generally and in strategic planning specifically—there are more ways to fail than to succeed, and so possible failure is always lurking in the footsteps of incipient success.

When used in wise and skillful ways by a coalition of interested parties, strategic planning can help organizations focus on producing effective decisions and actions that create public value, further the organization's mission, meet its mandates, and satisfy key stakeholders. But one must always remember that strategic planning is not a substitute for strategic thinking, acting, and learning. Only caring and committed people can do that—and almost always via deliberative processes. Unfortunately, when used thoughtlessly, obsessively, or with excessive formality or rigidity, strategic planning can drive out precisely the kind of strategic thinking, acting, and learning it was supposed to promote. That kind of approach may be worse than no approach at all.

Furthermore, strategic planning is not a substitute for leadership broadly conceived. In my experience there is simply *no* substitute for leadership when it comes to engaging in strategic planning effectively. At least some key decision makers and process champions must be committed to it; otherwise, any attempts to use strategic planning are bound to fail. An effective strategic planning team also is typically needed. And skilled facilitators are often necessary.

A standard distinction is to argue that leadership is “doing the right things” whereas management is “doing things right.” My own view is that leadership and management *both* involve doing the right things *and* doing them well, but if one sticks with this rather simplistic distinction, clearly strategic planning is first and foremost about articulating mission, mandates, vision, goals, and the nature of the common good and public value to be created—doing the right things—and management is about making sure those things are done well through strategies and operations at reasonable cost. But no matter what your view of the similarities and differences between leadership and management, both matter, and both are needed if strategic planning is to succeed—since it won't succeed by itself!

In addition, strategic planning is not synonymous with creation of an organization's strategies. Organizational strategies have numerous sources, both planned and unplanned. Strategic planning is likely to result in a statement of organizational *intentions*, but what is *realized* in practice will be some combination of what is intended with what *emerges* along the way (Mintzberg,

Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 2009). Strategic planning can help organizations develop and implement effective strategies, but organizations also should remain open to unforeseen opportunities as well. Too much attention to strategic planning and reverence for strategic plans can blind organizations to other unplanned and unexpected—yet incredibly useful—sources of information, insight, and action.

It should be clear now that the *deliberation* among key actors in strategic planning—and especially among key decision makers—is of a very special kind: it is thoughtful, reflective, informed, appreciative, situation- and stakeholder-sensitive, mission-oriented, careful, and *political*—in the best sense. Deliberation of that sort involves a special kind of *discipline* harkening back to the Latin roots of the word emphasizing instruction, training, education, and learning. Of course, there is a second meaning of discipline embodied in later interpretations emphasizing order, control, and punishment. I personally prefer the emphasis on education and learning, although there clearly are occasions when imposing order, taking control, and imposing appropriate sanctions are appropriate. Key leaders, managers, and planners can best use strategic planning as a deliberative educational and learning tool to help them figure out what is really important and what should be done about it. Sometimes this means following a particular sequence of steps and preparing formal strategic plans, but not necessarily. The ultimate end of strategic planning should not be rigid adherence to a particular process or the production of plans. Instead, strategic planning should promote wise strategic thought, action, and learning on behalf of an organization and its key stakeholders. It should be used to create noteworthy public value. If it does not, then it has been a waste of time other than to fulfill some symbolic or procedural requirement.

Why Strategic Planning Is Becoming a Standard Intelligent Practice

The vast majority of public and nonprofit organizations now claim to engage in strategic planning (Poister & Streib, 1994; Berry & Wechsler, 1995; Berman & West, 1998; Joyce, 1999; Poister & Van Slyke, 2002; Poister, 2003). Exactly what they mean when they say that is unclear. All that is really clear is that strategic planning in general is an idea whose time appears to have come. Specifically, the idea that strategic planning is something that skilled leaders and managers do is well past the “tipping point” (Gladwell, 2002) and is now an idea “in good currency” (Schön, 1971). Doing strategic planning has become accepted practice—and indeed, when done well, it is an intelligent practice.

Having said that, many leaders and managers no doubt groan at the prospect of having to go through another round of strategic planning. They may have “been there, done that,” and, depending on their experience, may not want to do it again! They also have seen cost-benefit analysis,

planning-programming-budgeting systems, zero-based budgeting, management by objectives, continuous improvement, downsizing, contracting out, reinvention, reengineering, and a host of other techniques trumpeted by a cadre of authors and management consultants. They have also, all too often, seen the techniques fall by the wayside after a burst of initial enthusiasm. Managers in particular are frequently, and justifiably, tired of “buzzword bingo” and feel as if they are the victims of some sort of perverse management hazing or status degradation ritual (Schein, 1987, pp. 84–86).

But strategic planning is far from a passing fad, at least not the sort of deliberative strategic planning proposed in this book. The reason is that the strategic planning process presented here builds on the nature of *political* intelligence and decision making. So many other management techniques have failed because they ignore, try to circumvent, or even try to counter the political nature of life in private, public, and nonprofit sector organizations. Too many planners and managers, at least in my experience, just do not understand that such a quest is almost guaranteed to be quixotic. Politics is the method that we humans use to answer the analytically unresolvable questions of what should be done for collective purposes, how, and why (Moore, 1995, p. 54; Christensen, 1999; Stone, 2002; Mulgan, 2009).

Most of these new management innovations have tried to improve government decision making and operations by trying to impose a formal rationality on systems that are not rational, at least in the conventional meaning of that word. Public and nonprofit organizations (and communities) embody a *political* intelligence and rationality, and any technique that is likely to work well in such organizations must accept and build on the nature of political rationality (Wildavsky, 1979; March & Olsen, 1995; Stone, 2002).

Let us pursue this point further by contrasting two different kinds of decision making: the “rational” planning model and political decision making. The rational planning model, a rational-deductive approach to decision making, is presented in Figure 1.2. This model begins with goals; policies, programs, and actions are then deduced to achieve those goals. If there is a traditional plan-

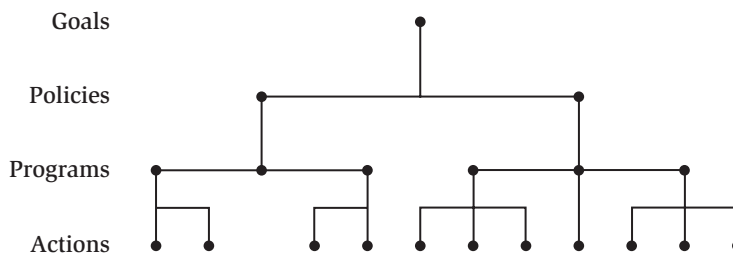


Figure 1.2. Rational Planning Model.

ning theology, this model is one of its icons. Indeed, if there were a Moses of planning, Figure 1.2 would have been etched on his tablets when he came down from the Mount.

Let us now examine a fundamental assumption of the rational planning model—that in the fragmented, shared power settings that characterize many public and nonprofit organizations, networks, and communities there will either be a *consensus* on goals, policies, programs, and actions necessary to achieve organizational aims, or there will be someone with enough *power and authority* that consensus does not matter. The assumption just does not hold in most circumstances. Only in fairly centralized, authoritarian, and quasi-military bureaucracies will the assumption hold—maybe (Roberts & Wargo, 1994).

Let us now examine a model that contrasts sharply with the rational planning model, the political decision-making model presented in Figure 1.3. This model is inductive, not rational-deductive. It begins with issues, which almost by definition involve conflict, not consensus. The conflicts may be over ends, means, timing, location, political advantage, reasons for change, or philosophy and values—and the conflicts may be severe. As efforts proceed to resolve the issues and learn how to move ahead, policies and programs emerge that address the issues and are politically rational—that is, they are politically acceptable to involved or affected parties. Over time, more general policies may be formulated to capture, frame, shape, guide, or interpret the policies, programs, and learning developed to deal with the issues. The various policies and programs are in effect treaties among the various stakeholder groups and, though they may not exactly record a consensus, at least they represent a reasonable level of agreement among stakeholders (Lindblom, 1965, 1990; March & Olsen, 1989, 1995; Weick, 2009).

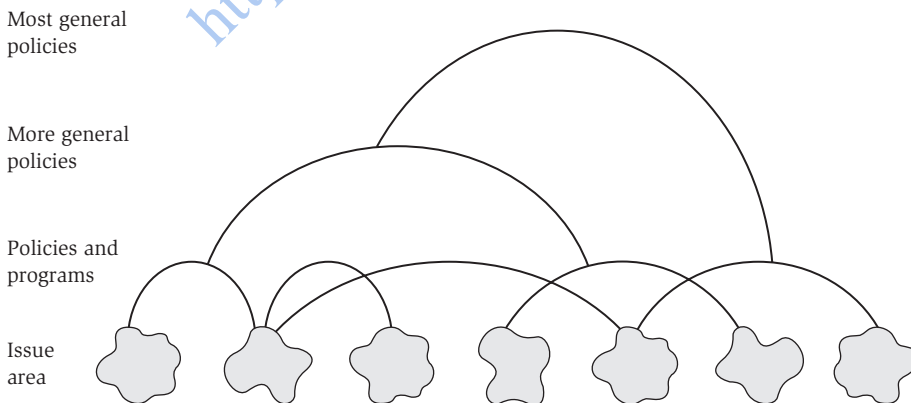


Figure 1.3. Political Decision-Making Model.

Now, the heart of the strategic planning process discussed in Chapter Two is the identification and resolution of strategic—that is, very important and consequential—issues. The process, in other words, accepts political decision making's emphasis on issues and seeks to inform the formulation and resolution of those issues. Effective strategic planning therefore should make political decision makers more effective, and, if practiced consistently, may even make their professional lives easier (Janis, 1989; Nutt, 2002). Since every key decision maker in a large public or nonprofit organization is, in effect, a political decision maker (Bolman & Deal, 2008), strategic planning can help these decision makers and their organizations. Strategic planning—at least as described in this book—therefore will last in government and nonprofit organizations because it accepts and builds on the nature of political decision making. If done well, it actually improves political decisions, as well as programs, policies, and learning how to do better, by joining political acceptability to administrative feasibility and substantive rationality.

Having drawn a sharp distinction between the rational planning and political decision-making models, I must now emphasize that the two models are not inherently antithetical. Indeed, research by Judith Innes (1996; Innes & Booher, 2010) and her colleagues demonstrates that multiparty efforts to reach consensus on important issues fraught with conflict often can look extremely messy in practice, but then meet very high standards of rationality after all of the political, technical, administrative, procedural, and legal issues have been sorted out. The challenge in this case is simply to sequence the approaches appropriately. The political decision-making model is necessary to work out consensual agreements on what programs (services, projects, and so on) and policies will best resolve key issues. Then the rational planning model can be used to recast that consensus in the form of goals, policies, programs, and actions. While the planning and decision making that go into the formulation of a strategic plan may look fairly sloppy to an outsider, once a consensus is reached on what to do, the resulting strategic plan can be rewritten—rationalized—in a form that is in fact quite rational by ordinary definitions of the term. Furthermore, the rational planning model may be used to sort out and address any minor (and perhaps major) inconsistencies embedded in the political consensus. Clear goals, when backed by political agreement and authority, can help foster and guide organizational innovation and effectiveness (Nutt, 2002; Moynihan & Pandey, 2010; Mulgan, 2009).

To use another example, in many organizations and communities there exists a broad-based consensus on basic purposes and values—and often on many policies, programs, and actions as well. There may even be a consensus on the organization's or community's vision. This consensus can be recast using the rational planning model. The political model can then be used to address remaining issues on which there is no agreement. In particular, the

remaining issues are likely to revolve around what would have to be done in order to achieve the agreed-upon goals or vision.

To summarize: A great advantage of the strategic planning process outlined in this book is that the process does not presume consensus where it does not exist, but can accommodate consensus where it does exist. Because there is no presumption of consensus, the process is more suitable for politicized circumstances than purely “rational” approaches. An intense attention to, and deliberation about, stakeholders and their interests, external and internal environments, and strategic issues means that the actions that are ultimately agreed-upon are more likely to be *politically* wise, and that organizational survival and prosperity are, therefore, more likely to be assured. Furthermore, by gathering relevant information, asking probing questions, and focusing on how best to raise the issues, the process can be used to inform political decision making in such a way that virtuous public and nonprofit purposes are better served than they would be if only the rawest forms of political decision making prevailed (Flyvbjerg, 1998). The process, in other words, provides a way of blending substantive rationality (that is, the content of the final answer makes sense), procedural rationality (that is, the steps followed make reasonable sense to the parties involved or affected), *and* political rationality (that is, acceptability to the interested parties)—content *and* process *and* politics—in wise ways to the betterment of the organizations and communities that use it (March & Olsen, 1989, 1995; Nutt, 2002; Stone, 2002; Innes & Booher, 2010; Eden & Ackermann, 2010).

DEFINITION, PURPOSE, AND BENEFITS OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

What is strategic management and how does strategic planning relate to it? Strategic management is a more inclusive concept than strategic planning, because strategic management is the reasonable integration of strategic planning and implementation across an organization (or other entity) in an ongoing way to enhance the fulfillment of mission, meeting of mandates, continuous learning, and sustained creation of public value (see Exhibit 1.1). Strategic management should thus be considered a part of organizational *governance*, which as Owen Hughes (2010, pp. 87–88) points out, “is about running organizations, about setting up structures to enable the organization to be run. . . . In English, the verb *govern* derives from the Latin *gubernare*, meaning steer, direct, rule.”

Functionally, strategic planning involves the kind of deliberative, disciplined work intended to help clarify organizational purposes, mandates, goals, and

Exhibit 1.1. Strategic Planning and Strategic Management: Definitions, Functions, and Approaches.

	<p style="text-align: center;">Strategic Management</p> <p>The integration of strategic planning and implementation across an organization (or other entity) in an ongoing way to enhance the fulfillment of mission, meeting of mandates, and sustained creation of public value</p>			
	<p style="text-align: center;">Strategic planning</p> <p>A deliberative, disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why it does it.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Implementation</p> <p>The effort to realize in practice an organization’s (or other entity’s) mission, goals and strategies, the meeting of its mandates, continued organizational learning, and the ongoing creation of public value.</p>		
<p>Functions</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> <p>Designing and integrating kinds of <i>work</i> that have to be done in a reasonably <i>formalized way</i>, for the sake of clarifying organizational purposes, mandates, goals, issues, strategies, and requirements for success; the work includes use of deliberative settings to foster collective strategic thinking, acting, and learning around key issues.</p> <p>Addressing the kinds of <i>work</i> that should be done in a reasonably <i>formalized way</i>, for the sake of building the enterprise’s <i>capacity for, and delivery of success over time</i>; the work includes linking purposes, people, structures, processes, resources, political support, and learning in productive ways.</p> <p>Clarifying the purpose and placement of the strategic planning function within a governmental or nonprofit organizational design.</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> <p>Designing an appropriate formal <i>strategic management system</i> and the placement and role of strategic and operational planning within it.</p> <p>Linking budgeting, performance measurement, and performance management to: meet mandates; achieve agreed mission, goals, strategies, and requirements for success; allow for desirable changes in ends and means to emerge over time; and achieve significant public value.</p> <p>Making use of forums and formative evaluations to tailor and adjust strategies during implementation to increase chances of success.</p> <p>Making use of forums and summative evaluations to help judge the degree to which success has been achieved, and whether new ends and means should be pursued.</p> </td> </tr> </table>		<p>Designing and integrating kinds of <i>work</i> that have to be done in a reasonably <i>formalized way</i>, for the sake of clarifying organizational purposes, mandates, goals, issues, strategies, and requirements for success; the work includes use of deliberative settings to foster collective strategic thinking, acting, and learning around key issues.</p> <p>Addressing the kinds of <i>work</i> that should be done in a reasonably <i>formalized way</i>, for the sake of building the enterprise’s <i>capacity for, and delivery of success over time</i>; the work includes linking purposes, people, structures, processes, resources, political support, and learning in productive ways.</p> <p>Clarifying the purpose and placement of the strategic planning function within a governmental or nonprofit organizational design.</p>	<p>Designing an appropriate formal <i>strategic management system</i> and the placement and role of strategic and operational planning within it.</p> <p>Linking budgeting, performance measurement, and performance management to: meet mandates; achieve agreed mission, goals, strategies, and requirements for success; allow for desirable changes in ends and means to emerge over time; and achieve significant public value.</p> <p>Making use of forums and formative evaluations to tailor and adjust strategies during implementation to increase chances of success.</p> <p>Making use of forums and summative evaluations to help judge the degree to which success has been achieved, and whether new ends and means should be pursued.</p>
<p>Designing and integrating kinds of <i>work</i> that have to be done in a reasonably <i>formalized way</i>, for the sake of clarifying organizational purposes, mandates, goals, issues, strategies, and requirements for success; the work includes use of deliberative settings to foster collective strategic thinking, acting, and learning around key issues.</p> <p>Addressing the kinds of <i>work</i> that should be done in a reasonably <i>formalized way</i>, for the sake of building the enterprise’s <i>capacity for, and delivery of success over time</i>; the work includes linking purposes, people, structures, processes, resources, political support, and learning in productive ways.</p> <p>Clarifying the purpose and placement of the strategic planning function within a governmental or nonprofit organizational design.</p>	<p>Designing an appropriate formal <i>strategic management system</i> and the placement and role of strategic and operational planning within it.</p> <p>Linking budgeting, performance measurement, and performance management to: meet mandates; achieve agreed mission, goals, strategies, and requirements for success; allow for desirable changes in ends and means to emerge over time; and achieve significant public value.</p> <p>Making use of forums and formative evaluations to tailor and adjust strategies during implementation to increase chances of success.</p> <p>Making use of forums and summative evaluations to help judge the degree to which success has been achieved, and whether new ends and means should be pursued.</p>			

<p>Approaches to Fulfilling the Functions</p>	<p>A strategic planning approach is a kind of <i>response</i> to circumstances recognized as <i>challenges</i> that people judge to require a considered, collective, and often novel <i>response</i>.</p> <p>Such responses are part of complex social problem solving, inseparable—and in many ways indistinguishable from—other parts of the same thing. Still, for purposes of discussing enterprises in which planning plays a role, it is advantageous to use <i>strategic planning</i> to characterize this “part” of response scenarios to challenges.</p> <p>A widely used approach is the Strategy Change Cycle (Bryson, 2004), which includes attending to context and developing and linking purposes, strategies, participation, and the coalitions of support needed to adopt desirable changes and protect them during implementation, as well as building capacity for ongoing implementation, learning, and change.</p>	<p>Approaches to, or kinds of, <i>strategic management systems</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated units of management (or layered or stacked units of management), including use of cascaded Balanced Scorecards Strategic issues management, including PerformanceStat systems Contract models Portfolio approaches Collaboration models: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead organization Shared governance Partnership administrative organization Goals or benchmark approaches Hybrid models, that is, combinations of two or more of the above
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Source: Adapted in part from M. Barzelay and J. M. Bryson, “Two Views of Strategic Planning,” unpublished manuscript, January 2010; and Bryson, 2010a, p. S256.

strategies. It also includes designing an effective and responsive strategic management system that will build the enterprise’s capacity for, and delivery of, success over time. Implementation, however, involves the effort to realize in practice an organization’s mission, goals, and strategies, the meeting of its mandates, continued organizational learning, and the ongoing creation of public value. Doing so requires actually developing a useful strategic management system, including linking budgeting, performance measurement, and performance management, and allowing desirable changes in ends and means to emerge over time. Conceptually, it is useful to view strategic planning as

the “front end” of strategic management, even though most strategic planning efforts begin amid the implementation of previously designed, or currently emerging, strategies.

There are many different ways to approach strategic planning in practice. This book focuses on one, the Strategy Change Cycle, which is presented in some detail in the next chapter. The approach is generic and must be tailored in an ongoing way to fit specific purposes and circumstances. It is also important to keep in mind that strategic planning is just one of the ways in which important strategy change is brought about; those using the process must be attentive to other sources and avenues of positive change and figure out ways for the strategic planning effort to make use of or complement them.

Similarly, there are many different approaches to designing a strategic management system in practice, where the approach again must be tailored in an ongoing way to fit specific purposes and circumstances. Seven different major approaches are listed in Exhibit 1.1, of which the most important is perhaps the last: hybrid models. Because purposes and circumstances are often so situation-specific, most effective strategic management systems are hybrids of two or more of the other approaches. All seven approaches are discussed in Chapter Ten. To summarize, this book is mainly but not exclusively about *strategic planning*, but I will always emphasize the need to do the planning with the requirements for, and function of, implementation and strategic management kept clearly in mind.

Three Examples of Strategic Planning

Throughout this book the experiences of three organizations (one public, one nonprofit, and the third a cross-sector collaboration) are used to illustrate key points about strategic planning—including its capacity for accommodating procedural, substantive and political rationality. Each of these organizations used a variant of the strategic planning process outlined here, explicitly or implicitly adapting it for their own purposes. I was a strategic planning consultant for two of the organizations, although the extent of my involvement varied. Each of these projects represented an action research project in which the aims included developing theory and guidance for practice (Eden & Huxham, 1996). I had no involvement in the third organization’s planning effort other than the fact that the chief planner was a former student and a student team in my strategic planning class prepared a case study of the process (Enke, Nguy, Sullivan, & Zenk, 2009).

The first of the three organizations described here is the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (the Park Board), which oversees one of the nation’s premier municipal park systems. The Park Board is a semi-autonomous part of the government of the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Park Board has its own separately elected board and its own taxing powers, subject to some oversight by other parts of Minneapolis government. The nonprofit is

The Loft Literary Center, a nationally famous writers' support organization founded in 1974 and headquartered in Minneapolis. The Loft serves thousands of people each year through classes, mentoring, readings, in-school and in-community programs of many kinds, and efforts to build an audience for literature.

The third organization is MetroGIS, a cross-sector, completely voluntary collaboration of three hundred units of government, businesses, and nonprofit organizations serving the seven-county Minneapolis–St. Paul, Minnesota, metropolitan area, whose purpose is to help its members address their shared geographic information needs and help them get the most out of their existing resources. This purpose is accomplished through the collaboration's voluntary efforts to: (1) implement regional solutions to geospatial information needs shared by its stakeholder organizations, and (2) address policy and procedural barriers that inhibit widespread sharing of geospatial data or geographic information. MetroGIS's sole purpose is to foster collaborative solutions and it does so by providing a forum (or fora) for defining collaborative solutions to shared geospatial needs; it does not own any geospatial data or operate any geographic information system (GIS). The forum is coordinated by a small group of public servants housed within—but not reporting to—the region's metropolitan government, the Metropolitan Council (MC). The MC is the primary sponsor of MetroGIS. One full-time MetroGIS staff coordinator, along with 3–4 members of the Council's GIS Unit—who together average approximately 1.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) for this purpose—comprise the dedicated support team. These individuals, in turn, leverage support resources on a project-by-project basis from the stakeholder community to define and implement the subject regional solutions. Although the support team is employed by the MC, MetroGIS does not report to the Council. The MC has representation on the MetroGIS Policy Board. Decisions of the board, which are made by consensus by all affected and relevant parties, authorize the regional solutions to shared geospatial needs. MetroGIS has won numerous national and international awards for its work. A number of other less detailed examples are used as well to clarify the discussion.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (Park Board). The Park Board was created in 1883 through an act of the Minnesota Legislature and is a semi-autonomous body of nine independently elected commissioners overseeing one of the country's largest and best municipal park systems. The Park Board has dual roles of natural resource steward and program provider and has received numerous awards and accolades for its work—including having *USA Today* say it is the “closest to park nirvana” among U.S. park systems (<http://www.minneapolisparcs.org>).

The Park Board is responsible for governing, maintaining, and developing the Minneapolis park system, which serves millions of visitors each year

(Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, 2007). The Park Board manages 182 park properties comprising 6,732 acres of land and water. The properties include local and regional parks, playgrounds, golf courses, gardens, picnic areas, biking and walking paths, nature sanctuaries, and a 55-mile parkway system, as well as cultural and historical sites such as the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden and the nineteenth-century Stone Arch Bridge (that my wife and I see from our living room window) across the Mississippi River.

Minneapolis voters elect Park Board commissioners during general elections every four years; three are elected at-large and six represent geographical park districts. Commissioners, among other responsibilities, develop park policies, enact ordinances governing the use of park facilities, and hire the superintendent of parks. At the end of 2009 the superintendent oversaw approximately 450 permanent year-round, 225 part-time, and many seasonal employees. At the end of fiscal year 2009 the Park Board had revenues of approximately \$71.7 million and expenditures of approximately \$68.9 million.

As noted, the Park Board is semi-autonomous. This has led to occasionally complicated relationships with other governmental bodies, particularly the City of Minneapolis, depending on who the mayor and city council members are. The commissioners' powers include the ability to levy property taxes and own land within and outside the City of Minneapolis. However, the city can determine a cap for the property tax levy. Resulting power struggles have sometimes created a difficult political environment for the Park Board. For example, in 2002 a majority of Park Board commissioners voted to spend almost \$5.8 million to purchase and rehabilitate a riverfront building (Brandt, 2002). Some vocal citizens and elected officials felt that the tax dollars could be better spent on park services or infrastructure improvements at park centers. Minneapolis mayor R. T. Rybak vetoed the decision, but the Park Board overrode the veto, which heightened strains between the city and its Park Board (Brandt, 2002). The action led to temporary budgetary difficulties.

By the early part of the new millennium, the Park Board was in an uncomfortable position. The commissioners' internal bickering made it very difficult to hire a new superintendent (Grow, 2003). The agency faced financial difficulties, city demographics were changing, other agencies' planning efforts required a response, and a series of public missteps strained the Park Board's relationships with some government bodies and parts of the community at large. As a 2003 *Minneapolis Star Tribune* article lamented: "The Park Board has been a sorely divided body for several years, at war internally over matters of staff, budget and procedure" (Grow, 2003, p. 2B).

In 2001, the Park Board contracted with a planning consultant to begin a strategic planning process. Although the consultant conducted initial interviews with commissioners, the planning process was delayed by budgetary and administrative changes. At the beginning of 2004, new Interim

Superintendent Jon Gurban began reorganizing the staff and procurement processes. He began by restructuring the organization into cross-functional teams across three newly delineated districts and assigned a district administrator to each one. These changes provided needed vertical and horizontal integrative capacity and accountability that had not existed before. He also promoted Jennifer Ringold in July 2005 to Citywide Planner to lead an upcoming strategic planning effort. She began working on the project in earnest in August 2005 and made her first presentation to the board in October 2005. In January 2006, four new commissioners, who had run on a platform of change and been elected, joined the Park Board. Under Gurban's leadership, Ringold's day-to-day direction, and the new board, the strategic planning process was fully under way.

The Loft Literary Center (The Loft). The Loft began in the early 1970s when a group of then-unknown writers who wanted to learn from and support each other gathered in a loft above a Minneapolis bookstore. The Loft was officially founded in 1974 and incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1975. Many of the Loft's founders went on to national and international fame, including Garrison Keillor, Robert Bly, Patricia Hampl, Jim Moore, Phebe Hanson, and others. The organization has grown to include 2,800 members and the list of established writers of regional, national, and international renown has grown as well. The Loft has become the nation's largest and most comprehensive literary center. It is now located in the award-winning Open Book literary arts building in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Loft both grew out of, and helped build, one of the most literate and book-friendly regions in the country (<http://www.loft.org>). (And it pleases me greatly to live across the street from the Loft and the Open Book and its coffee shop.) At the end of 2007, when the strategic planning process began, the Loft had 19 full-time employees. At the end of 2009, that number had been trimmed to 15 full-time and one part-time employees and a pool of about two hundred regular contract creative writing teachers. Total revenues at the end of fiscal year 2009 in the midst of the recession were around \$1.8 million, whereas expenses were around \$2.0 million, prompting the reduction in staff and a new, quicker round of strategic planning.

The Loft offers services for readers and writers at every level. Children's literature, poetry, playwriting, novels, memoirs, the spoken word, and other literary forms and media are all featured. There are readings by well-known local, national, and international authors; classes; weekend genre festivals; competitions and grants; open groups; writer's studios; mentoring programs; and so on. The list of the Loft's alumni and guests reads much like a *Who's Who* of American letters.

The Loft also has a tradition of strategic planning, having prepared plans for 1996–2001, 2002–2007, and now 2007–2012. This last planning effort is the

focus in this book (although some attention will be devoted to a shorter effort begun in 2010 to update the plan and address the consequences of pressing financial challenges). The effort took about 18 months from start to finish. It began early in 2006 and was initiated by the then-executive director Linda Myers, the executive committee, and the board of directors. They knew the current plan would expire in June 2007 and wanted to take enough time to have a widely participative process. Writers are a notably independent group and lots of participation would be needed to build the kind of consensus the Loft's leadership wanted in support of the final plan. Besides, all the major goals in the 2002–2007 Strategic Plan had been achieved so it was time to begin articulating the next major goals.

Although there were no crises to attend to, there were some concerns involving ongoing financing, changes in the demography of the region, the potentials and threats posed by new media, and leadership succession, as Myers was reaching an age when retirement might be a consideration. She had been in the post for 13 years and was widely admired for her work on behalf of the organization. But her very effectiveness and centrality to the organization's success meant it was wise to at least consider some succession planning. Two members of the board served as the strategic planning secretariat, including Jocelyn Hale, an accomplished businesswoman, nonprofit manager, community activist, writer, and mid-career student at the Humphrey School. Hale took a course from me in strategic planning and used the Loft as a real-life case study (Hale, 2007). We met regularly throughout the process to talk about how things were going and what might be done next. Then in March 2007 Myers announced that she would retire in October of that year. Some board members thought the strategic planning process should be held in abeyance until a new executive director was hired, but the board as a whole concluded it was best to proceed and to use the plan to help attract the right kind of director. The plan was finalized and formally adopted by the board in May 2007. Later in the summer Hale was hired as executive director (after a national search) and worked with Myers to effect a seamless transition (Hale, 2007).

MetroGIS. Before introducing MetroGIS, we first need to say something about geographic information systems and the Twin Cities regional government, the Metropolitan Council.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Technological innovations in recent decades have produced powerful Web-based geospatial mapping tools that can help a variety of groups solve problems and achieve ambitious goals. Users of the tools might be, for example, nonprofits or governments seeking to combat public health problems or a business entrepreneur wanting to corner new markets. Yet putting together a mapping system that draws on expertise and data-

bases of multiple organizations (at multiple levels of government and across sectors) is a challenging endeavor for leaders like those who were central to the creation and continuation of MetroGIS under the sponsorship of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Council.

Maps, of course, have been used throughout human history to visually represent geographic space, the elements making it up, and the relationships among the elements. The creation of an analogical space representing a larger geography is one of the great accomplishments of human history, on par with the development of language and numeracy (Robinson, 1982). Maps are crucial to knowing where anything is and to navigating between points; to assertions of sovereignty and the rights and duties of those under the sovereign power; to understanding amounts, capacities, or flows of various things (land, water, weather, traffic); to establishing ownership and the legitimacy of real property exchanges; and to a host of other purposes. Maps typically are two-dimensional, but represent three-dimensional spaces. They also can be three-dimensional, as in globes, or four-dimensional via time-lapsed presentations.

Since the 1960s, it has become possible to produce digitized geospatial information in order to create computerized maps (models) and to format, reformat, and analyze them using various analytic tools. Geographic information systems (GIS) are computerized models containing digitized, manipulable, geospatially referenced data. In a GIS, the maps are made up of layers (think of the zoom feature on Google Earth). Each layer consists of features (cities, jurisdictions, tracts of land) or surfaces (lakes, land uses, snow cover). The features have shapes and sizes; the surfaces have values (elevation, slope, temperature, depth). Features have specific locations identified by coordinate systems and can also be displayed at different sizes (scales) (Ormsby, Napoleon, Burke, Groessl, & Feaster, 2004, pp. 2–10). Google Maps (<http://www.maps.google.com>) is the best-known GIS, but doesn't come close to the functionality of cutting-edge GISs. Each version of Google Maps includes more and increasingly accurate data, including geospatially referenced video feeds. Automobiles increasingly come with onboard GIS systems as standard equipment to assist with navigation; most include voice directions.

The Metropolitan Council (MC). The Metropolitan Council (MC) was created in 1967 to be the regional planning and coordinating agency for the Minneapolis–St. Paul region of Minnesota. It formally sponsors MetroGIS and has assumed primary responsibility for its support.

Since the 1960s the Minneapolis–St. Paul region has experienced many of the same problems as other metropolitan centers in the United States and other developed nations. Leaders in the region responded over many years by creating regional government structures—especially the MC—that increased the capacity of local, state, and federal governments to tackle regional public

problems (Bryson & Crosby, 1992; Metropolitan Council, 2010). The council works with local communities to provide the following services:

- Operating the region's largest bus system
- Collecting and treating wastewater
- Engaging communities and the public in planning for future growth
- Providing forecasts of the region's population and household growth
- Providing affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families
- Providing planning, acquisitions, and funding for a regional system of parks and trails
- Providing a framework for decisions and implementation for regional systems including aviation, transportation, parks and open space, water quality, and water management

The MC's governing board consists of 17 members, 16 of whom represent a geographic district and one chair who serves at large. They are all appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the governor. At present, the MC has staff of 3,700 and an annual operating budget of about \$700 million, 90 percent of which is funded by state appropriations and user fees such as wastewater treatment charges and transit fares. Ten percent comes from local property taxes. The bulk of the MC's employees operate the region's transit and regional wastewater treatment systems.

Although the MC had accomplished many things since its establishment, by the early 1990s regional officials and planners were still struggling to have timely, accurate, reliable, and comparable geospatial information about local conditions so they could understand the contours of transportation, housing, open space, and waste treatment challenges; generate solutions that were more finely tuned to local and regional realities; and build the coalitions needed for necessary policy changes and resource allocation choices. Said differently, in any democratic society based on the rule of law, accurate, timely, geospatially referenced information is absolutely necessary for effective governance, planning, and coordination. The MC had for years produced information, but it was often based on estimates and projections that did not take into account the carrying capacity of the land.

MetroGIS grew out of the efforts of a group of public officials and managers, along with partners in other sectors, to remedy this shortcoming. They sought to create a shared GIS for the region that linked and made easily accessible business, government, and nonprofit databases of accurate, timely, standardized, and needed geospatially referenced information; and acquired or developed the software applications to make use of the data to solve public problems.

These leaders strove to improve multiple governments' capacities for public problem solving around a host of issues affecting the Twin Cities metropolitan region, including urban traffic congestion, economic development, affordable housing, threats to water availability and quality, provision of parks and other recreational opportunities, waste management, and crime. Government structures and tools often are simply inadequate to allow government agencies to carry out responsibilities and partner effectively with other organizations (Kettl, 2008; Osborne, 2010). Developing these structures and tools can be a major leadership challenge—and certainly was in the MetroGIS case.

MetroGIS. In this book we will trace the efforts of MC administrators and appointed officials, along with several county commissioners and others, to develop a sustainable cross-governmental, cross-sector system for sharing detailed geographic information (for example, exact location of land parcels, streets, sewer, and utility lines) across numerous jurisdictional boundaries (MetroGIS, 2009; Bryson, Crosby, & Bryson, 2009; Crosby & Bryson, 2010).

MetroGIS is now fourteen years old and involves three hundred governmental units, businesses, and nonprofit organizations. The organization's small coordinating staff is housed in the MC. Its policy board consists exclusively of government representatives, but its management-level coordinating committee and technical advisory team consist of members representing a variety of units of government, businesses, and nonprofits.

MetroGIS is now nationally and internationally recognized as one of the best collaborative GIS organizations in the world. Its accomplishments include, among other things (MetroGIS, 2009):

- Implementing, or making substantial progress on implementing, regional solutions for eight of the MetroGIS community's thirteen priority information needs: jurisdictional boundaries; street addresses/where people live; parcels/parcel identifiers; highway and road networks; census boundaries; lakes, wetlands, water courses; land cover; and planned land use.
- Implementing MetroGIS DataFinder as a registered node of the Federal National Spatial Data Infrastructure, fully integrated into the State of Minnesota's Geographic Data Clearinghouse, supporting not only traditional downloading of geospatial data but also accessing geospatial data via emerging Web service technology. Over two hundred datasets are currently accessible via DataFinder. Over eight hundred data downloads per month occur and the trend is a steady increase in the form of data and Web services.
- Executing agreements that provide access by all government interests serving the seven-county metropolitan area, without fee

and subject to identical access requirements, to parcel and other geospatial data produced by all seven metro area counties and the MC.

- Maintaining active involvement of key stakeholder representatives at the policy, management, and technical levels since MetroGIS's inception in 1995.

The road to these achievements has been a long and not necessarily easy one. In this book we will discuss the two major strategic planning efforts undertaken by MetroGIS. The first took place in the mid-1990s and resulted in the creation of the organization. The second occurred in 2007–2008 and resulted in a new and expanded mission for the organization.

Comparisons and Contrasts. These three organizations offer a number of comparisons and contrasts. All are Minnesota-based, but they differ in size, staff, budgets, and legal status. The Park Board is a unit of local government. The Loft is an independent nonprofit organization. And MetroGIS is a cross-sector collaboration whose coordinating staff consists of public servants well down the organizational hierarchy of the regional government that serves as its primary sponsor.

The strategic planning effort for these organizations differed in the extent to which it focused directly on the organization and what it should do or on what should happen in the community of which the organization is a part. The Park Board focused on both organizational and community planning. MetroGIS focused on itself—where “itself” is a virtual enterprise linking three hundred organizations from across the broad regional community. MetroGIS also was intent on building the capabilities of its stakeholders to leverage the power of GIS technology and collaborative solutions to shared geospatial needs to improve their organizational effectiveness. Most of the stakeholders were governments having both organizational and community responsibilities. Finally, the Loft was focused mostly on the organization and its members, but also saw its role and mission as building the audience for literature. In short, for these organizations the boundary between what is “inside” and what is “outside” the organization is somewhat blurred.

In addition, the three organizations engaged in strategic planning for different reasons. The Park Board had never really had a strategic plan and also faced some serious issues, including financial challenges, changing city demographics, the need to respond to planning efforts by the City of Minneapolis and the Metropolitan Council, and at times difficult relationships on its board and with some leaders of Minneapolis's city government and the community at large. The process could provide a way for everyone to come together around the preservation and enhancement of the park system. The Loft had a habit

of regular strategic planning and the time had come to produce the next plan. The Loft didn't face an emerging crisis, but its funding environment had become tougher and the match with the organization's capabilities had to be explored in relation to changing community demographics and emerging technologies and media. In addition, the need for leadership succession planning had to be considered. MetroGIS engaged in two strategic planning efforts, one in the mid-1990s and the other in 2007–08. The first effort was to determine exactly what the purpose, goals, strategies, and structure of a new regional GIS should be. The establishment of a functioning, effective regional GIS altogether took a decade and was hardly easy to do. The second effort took place after the organization had achieved its initial goals and survived a major challenge to its existence. The new mission that emerged from this process was to help participating organizations build their *own* capacities to address “shared geographic information technology needs and maximize investments in existing resources through widespread collaboration of organizations serving the area” (MetroGIS, 2010). The new mission takes MetroGIS into a whole new territory.

There are a number of similarities in the three cases as well. First, each organization succeeded because it had leaders willing to act as *process sponsors* to endorse and legitimate the effort. The sponsors were not always particularly active participants, and they were not always at the top of the organizational hierarchy, but they did let it be known that they wanted important decision makers and managers to give the effort a good try. Second, each organization had *process champions* committed to making the process work. The champions did not have preconceived ideas about what specific issues and answers would emerge from the process, although they may have had some good hunches. They simply believed that the process would result in good answers and pushed until those answers emerged (Bryson & Roering, 1988, 1989).

Third, each organization ultimately developed a fairly clear understanding and agreement among key decision makers about what strategic planning was and what they expected from the process. Fourth, each followed a reasonably structured strategic thinking, acting, and learning process. Fifth, each had a decision-making or advisory body to oversee the process. Sixth, each had a strategic planning team to manage the process, collect information and prepare for meetings, engage in serious strategic dialogue, and draft a strategic plan. Seventh, each identified critical issues that required effective action if the organization were to capitalize on important opportunities, avoid being victimized by serious threats, or both. Eighth, each worked hard to develop strategies that created public value and were politically acceptable, technically workable, administratively feasible, and ethically responsible. Ninth, each relied on outside assistance, including consultants, to help with the process—though particularly in the Park Board's case consultants were typically used

to train staff to do the work consultants might otherwise do. Tenth, each made a point of not getting so bogged down in the process that they lost sight of what was truly important: strategic thinking, acting, and learning. And finally, each gained many of the potential benefits of strategic planning outlined above.

SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed what strategic planning is and why it is important. Its importance stems from its ability to help organizations and communities anticipate and respond to change in wise and effective ways. Not only have the environments of public and nonprofit organizations and communities changed dramatically in the recent past, more upheaval is likely in the future. The post-industrial, post-modern, post-structural, post-9/11, post-2007–2009 financial meltdown era is one in which continuous progress can hardly be taken for granted. In fact, we should *expect* periods of stability and small changes—interrupted by instability and significant change; uncertainty, ambiguity, and equivocality; happy surprises but also unhappy jolts—and occasional terror. In the last century we experienced world wars, big booms, big busts, modernism, post-modernism, post-structuralism, and major new roles for government and nonprofit organizations. In the last half century or so, the United States experienced the effects of the Korean War, the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, major student disruptions, the disastrous war in Vietnam, the antiwar movement, the environmental movement, the collapse of the Soviet Union, dramatic shifts in the dominant political ideology in the United States, HIV/AIDS, lengthy wars in the Middle East, growing public cynicism, staggering new technologies, unprecedented economic growth but a continuation of sometimes brutal business cycle downturns, the emergence of the European Union, China, and India as serious economic competitors, a dramatic spread of democracy, and globalization—plus all the other changes noted in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. The current century opened with all the hope of a new millennium—and was quickly followed in the United States by the appalling 2000 presidential election process; the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center; the collapse of Enron, Worldcom, Adelphi, and a host of other once-famed, yet ultimately corrupt corporations; wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; the worst economic recession since the Great Depression; and now the biggest federal debt in our history, with really deep government budget cuts at all levels to follow. It all reminds me of a quotation attributed to Lord Salisbury (Robert Gascoyne-Cecil), three-time British Prime Minister in the nineteenth century: “Change, change, who needs change? Aren’t things bad enough already?” Or a handwritten sign on a tip jar filled with coins at a

cash register in a coffee shop in Portland, Oregon: “If you don’t like change, leave it here.” If only it were that simple!

Strategic planning is one way to help organizations and communities deal with their changed circumstances. Strategic planning is intended to enhance an organization’s ability to think, act, and learn strategically. It can help organizations clarify and resolve the most important issues they face. It can help them build on strengths and take advantage of major opportunities, while they overcome or minimize weaknesses and serious challenges. It can help them be much more effective in what seems to be a more hostile world. If it does not do that, it probably was not worth the effort, even though it may have satisfied certain legal mandates or symbolic needs.

Figure 1.1 showed how strategic planning can help an organization (or other entity) deliberate about how it might get from where it is to where it wants to be. Figure 1.4 shows another way to think about strategic planning that more forcefully demonstrates its importance in terms of purposes and functions—namely, that strategic planning is meant to help public and non-profit organizations and communities create public value through meeting their mandates and fulfilling their missions. In order to do so, it must help produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what the organization is, what it does, and why it does it. Producing those decisions and actions requires an interconnected set of activities that organizes effective participation;

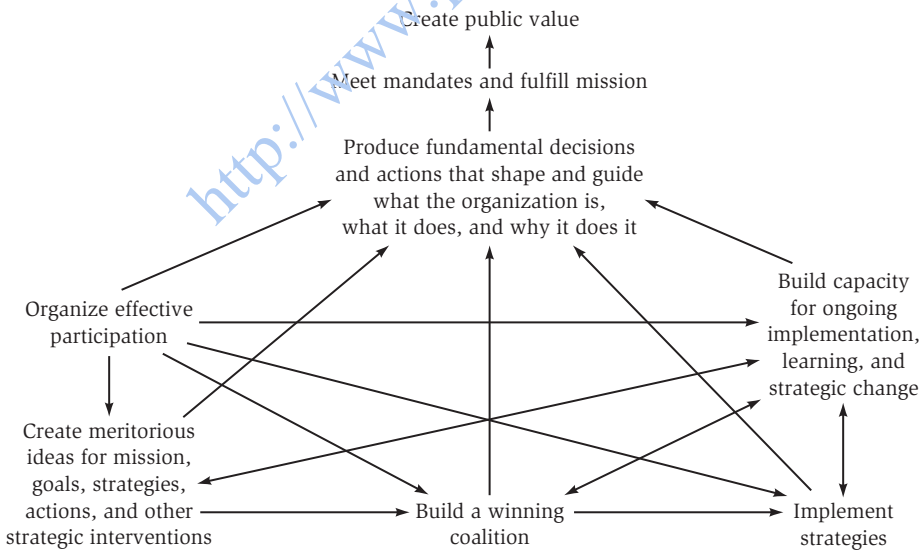


Figure 1.4. Purposes and Functions of Strategic Planning and Management.

Source: Adapted from Bryson, 2004a, p. 28.

creates meritorious ideas for mission, goals, strategies, actions, and other strategic interventions; builds a winning coalition; implements strategies; and builds capacity for ongoing implementation, learning, and strategic change.

Strategic planning clearly is a leadership and management innovation that is likely to persist because, unlike many other recent innovations, it accepts and builds on the nature of *political* decision making. Raising and resolving important issues is the heart of political decision making, and the heart of strategic planning. Strategic planning seeks to improve on raw political decision making, however, by helping to ensure that issues are raised and resolved in ways that benefit the organization, its key stakeholders, and society.

Chapter Two presents my preferred approach to strategic planning for governments, public agencies, nonprofit organizations, boundary-crossing collaborations, and communities. Subsequent chapters will discuss how to apply the process to help public and nonprofit organizations, collaborative networks, and communities create public value, fulfill their missions, meet their mandates, and serve their stakeholders effectively, efficiently, and responsibly. The good news in this book is of two sorts: There is lots of good work to do, and strategic planning can help you do it. The bad news is also of two sorts: strategic planning is not necessarily easy, and there is no guarantee of success. That's when it helps to remember the words of former senator and vice president Hubert H. Humphrey (1959): "Sometimes we get so overwhelmed by the problems of today that we forget the promise of tomorrow." Indeed, it may be even more helpful to consider the words of Samuel Beckett, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, in *Worstward Ho* (1984): "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better." Beckett's words are helpful because often failure of various sorts prompts the strategic thinking, acting, and learning necessary for success (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005; Bryson & Crosby, 2008). The key is to use a deliberative, disciplined process that allows strategic thinking, acting, and learning to be joined for the ultimate benefit of those involved or affected. The next chapter presents such a process.