

Chapter 5. Planning for Weed and Seed

Overview

This chapter provides guidance on the Weed and Seed planning process at the local level. It provides local sites with clear direction from the national level that will be instrumental in creating a comprehensive and cohesive initiative for Weed and Seed. The local strategy should mirror the national strategy while still reflecting local conditions. Weed and Seed participants should always keep in mind that Weed and Seed is a strategy, not a program.

This chapter explains the steps required to begin and carry out the planning process. Two types of plans are needed for Weed and Seed. The first is the site's strategic plan, which outlines the site's vision, mission, critical priorities, goals, and objectives. The second is the implementation plan, which is a continuation of the strategic plan and defines in greater detail the tasks and resources required and the timeline needed to achieve the goals and objectives.

Vision

Weed and Seed sites share some common features such as crime and poor social and economic conditions. These risk factors make these communities the most challenging to restore. Given their commitment to overcoming these challenges, it is important for the Steering Committee to develop a plan of action that everyone can follow. This plan serves as a blueprint for determining which actions will be taken and by whom and how certain goals and objectives will be achieved.

Once completed, the plan also provides a vision of what the community can achieve through

the positive interventions of Weed and Seed activities. Some activities may already be in place; others may have to be developed. One of the unique features of Weed and Seed is bringing stakeholders together to address issues affecting the community. For many people, this will be the first time they have worked together.

Implementation Process

Seven steps are recommended in planning your local Weed and Seed strategy.

Step 1: Assemble the Planning Team

Some communities quickly form a Steering Committee to lead the planning process. In other communities, a core group of individuals takes responsibility for putting the planning process into action and keeping other individuals informed of progress.

Experience has demonstrated that making individuals from the community members of this Planning Committee is a strategic decision that helps move the planning process forward. Individuals who serve on the Planning Committee may or may not ultimately serve on the Steering Committee; however, emphasis should be placed on identifying individuals who have the time, expertise, influence, and commitment to work through the process to create a realistic local strategy.

Step 2: Identify Resources for Planning

After the Planning Committee is in place, there are different ways to proceed:

- Identify a person to serve as a facilitator.
- Identify committee members to lead different components of the planning process.



- Engage a professional facilitator from the community (e.g., local university, tribal college, nonprofit agency).

Do not underestimate the ability of local stakeholders to lead the planning process. Talk with others who have been involved in implementing Weed and Seed sites to learn about their planning experiences. Planning can be a great team-building exercise for Weed and Seed supporters.

Before starting, everyone included in the planning process should understand what is involved. Often, residents who have never been a part of this type of process feel reluctant to become fully engaged unless information or “preplanning” activities are provided.

If the site is a tribal location, the planner is encouraged to coordinate closely with the Tribal Council or executive regarding planning and implementation efforts. This will also ensure continued support throughout participation in Weed and Seed activities and sustainment of efforts after federal funding has ceased.

Before outlining the local context for developing a strategy, some of the primary tasks and sub-tasks associated with developing a strategy should be outlined. This list can be used as the planning process is initiated.

- Identify critical priorities.
- Develop goals consistent with CCDO goals.

- Develop objectives to support the goals consistent with CCDO objectives.
- Develop an implementation plan.

Step 3: Prepare To Plan

At this point, data collected from the community assessment process will be used to develop the site’s strategic and implementation plans. The priorities identified will first be converted into goals and objectives that reflect the needs and views of the community.

Tensions can develop at the local level during discussions about priorities. Law enforcement officials may see criminal activity basically in terms of arrest and incarceration, while community members may feel that greater public safety is more important. Finding ways to coordinate different strategies can produce powerful new approaches to problem solving. A list of examples would be extensive, as is the range of appropriate interventions.

Sound strategy development and planning must incorporate multiple perspectives that include effective programs and services as well as creative ways to solve community problems. Understanding the local context is crucial in formulating any strategy and subsequent plan. Moreover, understanding the local aspects of past and current working relationships helps the implementation process.

A primary objective in preparing a solid strategy and implementation plan must be the development of open communication, cooperation, and trust. This can only be achieved through a planning process that is inclusive and respectful of the community and its residents.

Step 4: Move From Community Needs to Critical Priorities

Understanding the local context, combined with the planning process, prepares the Steering Committee to begin formulating local goals and

objectives. By this time, the Steering Committee should have taken steps to ensure that the planning process has included a balanced approach to developing community goals and objectives. The Steering Committee should now identify the priorities of the community.

During the needs assessment process, both assets and gaps in resources were identified. Part of the reason for identifying gaps was to encourage community residents and other stakeholders to shape a vision of what the community could be. Critical priorities are issues that could affect the ability of the community to achieve this vision. After identifying these priorities, it is necessary to assess the community's ability to address them.

The benefit of planning exercises is the critical thinking that emerges and the synergy created from bringing different groups together to work on the Weed and Seed strategy. At this point, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of key priorities may be applied. A SWOT analysis should address such questions as the following:

- How does this issue relate to the national Weed and Seed strategy?
- What are the strengths of the Weed and Seed site in responding to this issue? Consider the contributions of each community representative.
- What are the weaknesses of the Weed and Seed site in responding to this issue? Consider the contributions of each partner and his or her investment in the process.
- What opportunities can Weed and Seed pursue in addressing this issue? What are some programs or services currently being offered by each partner?
- What threats should Weed and Seed be aware of in responding to this issue?

- What are the consequences relative to achieving the vision of the community if this issue is not addressed under Weed and Seed?
- What should be the goal in addressing this issue? What will change or improve in the community?

After completing this exercise for each of the selected priorities, it is possible to condense and combine the items to correspond to one or more of the four Weed and Seed components:

- Law enforcement.
- Community policing.
- Prevention, intervention, and treatment.
- Neighborhood restoration.

When this exercise is completed, it is time to begin developing goals and objectives to respond to each priority issue.

Step 5: Link Critical Priorities to Goals and Objectives

In this implementation manual a goal is defined as a broad target to be achieved through the performance of tasks that connect to some measurable objectives. Objectives are viewed as the tools needed to provide some specificity to the goal. Objectives can be either qualitative or quantitative. Although the initial goals are often easy to formulate, measuring the achievement of these goals usually presents a challenge.

The goal statements should reflect major desired changes as a result of the Weed and Seed effort. Goal statements can be made by reversing problem statements so that they express the desired result.

The use of goals and objectives enhances the potential success of the Weed and Seed effort and facilitates effective implementation, management, and evaluation of Weed and Seed activities.



Although each of the four Weed and Seed components must have goals and objectives, these components do not operate in isolation from one another.

The goals for prevention and community restoration should work in conjunction with all other goals. Community policing should be a bridge between goals. As the police develop positive relationships with residents, they will gain insights into more of the problems that plague the community.

As mentioned previously, law enforcement activities should complement all goals. For example, if an objective is to construct a small business “incubator,” the implementation task should be to reduce and prevent crime by targeting that location and providing a secure area for the facility. Crime prevention should also support other economic development goals.

To achieve selected objectives, those objectives must be connected to specific Weed and Seed activities. The objectives must be measurable so that progress toward the stated goal can be gauged.

Although it may be tempting to develop several goals for each of the four components, the local strategy must be realistic if it is to demonstrate progress. It may be more advantageous to refine and reduce the list to a manageable number of critical priorities for Weed and Seed. This number should be flexible and related to the local community’s ability to handle the tasks.

Below is a review of the planning process:

1. Identify the critical priorities based on the community assessment. The top 10 issues will be the priorities for the local strategy.
2. Separate these priorities into one or more of the four Weed and Seed components.
3. Formulate goal statements for each of the priorities by asking, “What do we want?”
4. Develop measurable objectives for each goal that will help move the process toward achieving the goal. Take note of what will be measured to assess progress.

Remember, completing the goals, objectives, and tasks with everyone’s participation simplifies the process of developing the implementation plan. The following sections cover the implementation and management plan for Weed and Seed.

Step 6: Develop the Implementation Plan

Developing a Weed and Seed strategy can be challenging. Unlike independent organizations involved in strategic planning, the overall planning process for Weed and Seed involves several important actors who may never have worked together. Not only is there pressure to develop close working relationships quickly, these relationships must create a marriage of different perspectives, beliefs, and, often, biases. Developing common goals and objectives is one of the major hurdles to overcome; the design of an implementation plan is another.

The implementation plan for Weed and Seed involves several organizations undertaking a sequence of activities. Some of these activities are performed concurrently; others are sequential. Weed and Seed uses a holistic approach; therefore, law enforcement efforts should be reinforced with prevention, intervention, and treatment to make it difficult for the community to slide back to its preresoration condition.

Developing an implementation plan requires linking goals and objectives with tasks, assigning responsibility for these tasks, creating a timeline for action, and identifying resources necessary to implement the tasks. The tasks developed in the implementation plan should correspond to the commitments made in the memorandums of agreement (MOAs). Remember, everything in an effective Weed and Seed strategy is connected: neighborhood selection, needs assessment, identification of goals and objectives, implementation plan, and MOAs. A sequence of activities reinforces each Steering Committee member's or other stakeholder's commitment to Weed and Seed by helping the individual to see where he or she fits in the total plan. The implementation plan is the action guide for the strategy. The implementation plan should include answers to the following questions:

- What solutions will help to achieve the goal?
- What are the barriers to achieving the goal?
- How long will it take to achieve the goal?
- Who will be in charge of the activities for achieving the goal?
- How can the success of the strategy be measured?

In developing the implementation plan, it is important to determine which organization or agency will take the lead for each of the

proposed tasks. Other organizations will also be needed and will take direction from the lead organization. The time required to complete a task may exceed the total time allotted for the implementation plan. This happens when certain tasks take several years to complete. Most important, the tasks should be cited in the plan and progress toward achieving the objectives should be reported to the Steering Committee on a consistent basis.

The following steps are necessary to develop an implementation plan:

1. Identify all the tasks that must be completed to achieve each objective. Consider them one at a time. Do not group all objectives and tasks under one heading.
2. Determine which agency or organization should be responsible for implementing the tasks. Indicate which agency will serve as the lead and which others will be involved in carrying out the task. This selection should also correspond to the MOAs signed by all participating organizations.
3. Establish a realistic timeline for achieving the objectives. This timeframe can be used to monitor activities and progress.
4. Identify barriers that might hinder the work. It is better to be prepared for potential problem areas than to have to deal with them after implementing the strategy.

Step 7: Design a Planning Format for Your Local Strategy

One of the beauties of Weed and Seed is that it is designed to be flexible, proactive, and interactive. Continuous commitment of multiple resources is a key requirement for overall success. Furthermore, it is unrealistic to assume that local and tribal officials can confirm the availability of all necessary resources during the

initial planning phase. As the strategy develops, local and tribal agencies will discover new ideas and resources to assist the community. The neighborhood residents, law enforcement agencies, resource agencies, and others will continually recommend adjustments to the plan. The Steering Committee should encourage all participants and other interested groups to make recommendations for changes. Managers should not assume that the original goals and objectives are cast in stone.

Site coordinators who use project management software for Weed and Seed can input changes and generate reports by task, agency, milestone, and other criteria. Those without access to the software should maintain a manual system. This management system not only improves program oversight but also assists with program reporting.

The purpose of well-defined goals, objectives, and tasks is to ensure that the proper mix of activities results in a successful Weed and Seed initiative. However, even if complete goals and objectives exist, efficient or systematic implementation cannot be guaranteed. Management is responsible for converting these processes into a format that advances the functional operation of the strategy.

Directing the ongoing relationships among the tasks and their timely implementation is the backbone of the management process. Successful management of Weed and Seed involves assigning specific responsibility for executing each task. A task timeline organizes the tasks by each objective and enables managers to arrange the tasks in sequence. A timeline also shows when additional tasks are needed, responsibilities are to be identified, and the links between tasks are to be organized.

Exhibit 5–I. Identifying Critical Priorities and Their Corresponding Components

Critical Priorities	Corresponding Components			
	Law Enforcement	Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment	Community Policing	Neighborhood Restoration
High level of open-air drug trafficking	✓			
Lack of affordable housing ³				✓
Poor relationships between law enforcement and the community	✓		✓	
High level of youth gang activity	✓	✓		
High truancy and school dropout rates		✓		

³ The lack of housing and affordable housing, in particular, on tribal lands is the issue. The land status of many Indian reservations is currently held in Federal Trust by the U.S. Government (Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior); therefore, housing mortgages are extremely difficult to provide. Tribes may focus on education of tribal government representatives to address home mortgages, development or enhancement of Uniform Commercial Codes or training of judicial personnel.

Exhibit 5–2. How Can We Develop Goals To Address Our Critical Priorities?

Critical Priorities by Component Area	Goal Statement
<p>Law Enforcement</p> <p>High level of open-air drug trafficking High level of youth gang activity</p>	<p>Significantly reduce open-air drug trafficking Reduce level of youth gangs</p>
<p>Community Policing</p> <p>Poor relationship between law enforcement and the community</p>	<p>Strengthen lines of communication between residents and law enforcement officers</p>
<p>Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment</p> <p>High truancy and school dropout rates High level of youth gang activity</p>	<p>Reduce truancy and school dropout rates Establish alternative programs to help deter youth from participation in gangs</p>
<p>Neighborhood Restoration</p> <p>Lack of affordable housing</p>	<p>Increase number of new or rehabilitated homes in community</p>

Exhibit 5–3. Additional Estimates of Contributed Resources

<p>Federal</p> <p>The U.S. Department of Agriculture will assist in the provision of meals in the Safe Havens.</p> <p>State</p> <p>The Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse is contributing a grant-writing expert to assist individual agencies in applying for direct grants.</p> <p>Local</p> <p>The city manager has agreed to encourage all city agencies to cooperate in the establishment of Safe Havens and service provision.</p> <p>Tribal</p> <p>If the Indian tribe is a participant only in a Weed and Seed effort, the tribe provides a point of contact who will serve on the Steering Committee (tribal executive) and one to work with the various committees (staffer). If the tribe leads the Weed</p>	<p>and Seed effort, a tribal council member is assigned to move the formal coordination through the government process, and office space is provided for the designated Weed and Seed coordinator.</p> <p>Private</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A local T-shirt printer will provide 50 T-shirts with Safe Haven Safe Corridor Guard printed on them for members of the target area communities. 2. One dentist has pledged to provide free dental care to target community residents. 3. One medical doctor who is a family practitioner has offered her services free of charge to Weed and Seed communities. 4. A private small business has offered to employ some of the graduates of the jobs/literacy program.
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