



Evaluation Technical Assistance

EVALUATION

Compass

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Developing Strategies for Program Success

Identifying program strategies through strategic planning increases the likelihood that your school health program will be successful and achieve its goals.



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C O N T A C T

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a process that results in decisions and actions to guide what your school program is, what it does, and why it does it (Bryson, 2004). The product is a strategic plan—a document that describes your program’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOTs), and outlines strategies and future directions. CDC’s Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) has asked state, territorial, and local education agencies, and tribal governments funded under Cooperative agreement 801 to complete a strategic plan for their school health programs.

What is a Strategy?

A program strategy is the means or broad approach by which a program will achieve its goals. Strategies are integral to a strategic plan. Originally, the word strategy was used to describe the science of using military command to achieve an advantage over an enemy. Strategies can help DASH funded partners achieve an

advantage over the “enemy” of youth risk health behaviors, leading to improved health and well being of youth.

Compass Point #1: Identifying Program Data

In order to identify program strategies, it is first necessary to examine internal and external data related to your program.

Internal Data

Internal data describe the current status of your DASH funded program and how it operates, such as data from your DASH Program Inventory.

External Data

External data describe the population that your program serves and the environment in which your program operates, such as data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). You use these internal and external data to conduct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of your program.



Compass Point #2: Using Data to Conduct a SWOT Analysis

Identifying program data is only the first step to developing program strategies. Next, you need to analyze these data for indications of your program's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Program Strengths

Program strengths are elements internal to your school health program that facilitate reaching your program goals, such as a fully staffed team.

Program Weaknesses

Program weaknesses are internal elements that are barriers to reaching your program goals, such as a training cadre that is too small.

Program Opportunities

Program opportunities are aspects of the external environment that facilitate reaching program goals, such as new leaders in the community.

Resource Zone

Strategic Planning Kit for School Health Programs:

http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/evaluation/sp_toolkit.htm

This Web site provides guidance and tools for developing and using a strategic plan.

DASH Program Inventory:

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/evaluation/resources.htm>

This Web site provides and explains Program Inventories for DASH partners funded for HIV Prevention, CSHP/PANT, and Asthma Management.

Bryson JM. **Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations.**

3rd edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers; 2004.

This book explains strategic planning approaches and related resources.

Incorporating Strategies into Your Workplan

PROGRAM GOAL: To decrease risk behaviors associated with HIV infection among students within the school district.
Strategy 1: Form a community partnership that advocates for HIV-prevention education in schools.
Objective: By February 28, 2009, convene four meetings of a new community partnership group for HIV-prevention education in schools.
Activities: Create criteria for identifying partnership members, recruit the members, convene the meetings, and document the meetings.
Strategy 2: Provide professional development on HIV-prevention education to district health educators.
Objective: By February 28, 2009, conduct two, one-day workshops on HIV-prevention education for at least 90% of health educators in the district, including teachers, school nurses, and school counselors.
Activities: Recruit the trainers, design the workshops, market the workshops, implement the workshops, evaluate the workshops, and provide follow-up support to workshop participants

Program Threats

Program threats are aspects of the external environment that are barriers to reaching program goals, such as resistance of state schools to participate in the YRBS.

Use the results of your SWOT analysis to determine the best approaches for your program to meet its stated goals. These approaches are your strategies.

Compass Point #3: Writing Useful Strategies

A useful program strategy has the following characteristics:

- Expressed in a declarative statement that starts with a verb
- Describes a single program action and the object of the action
- Connects logically to the program goal
- Is broader than a program objective

- Is broader than a workplan activity
- Data indicate the need for the strategy
- The strategy does one or more of the following:
 - builds on program strengths
 - reduces the influence of program weaknesses
 - builds on program opportunities
 - reduces the influence of program threats



Strategic Planning includes these six steps on the road to program success.