Chapter 5

Action Plan

To create an information literacy program you need to follow a plan with steps that will help you develop clear ideas about what you want to achieve and how you intend to carry out your goals. The methodology for conducting strategic planning exercises varies from person to person and from one institution to another. Find out what the planning standards are in your parent institution. Remember to work with a plan that responds to your planning needs. In other words, you can create a plan just following some simple and essential steps: objectives, goals, justification, requirements, and budget. However, you may need to work on an orthodox or more complete strategic plan, such as the one that is discussed in the following sections. Remember to do whatever planning is relevant to create the appropriate program for your needs.

Planning: An IL first step. A strategic plan is an excellent tool to sell and get support from your learning community and your institutional authorities for your library information literacy goals. The planning steps can be adjusted or adapted from a management textbook depending on the time you have to craft your action. The recommended strategic planning practice is to involve library staff and representatives from the user communities, such as faculty, students and relevant school or university authorities. Ideally, the plan should be created with consensus and input from all the relevant parties. The common elements included in a strategic plan are:

Mission. This should be a paragraph stating the goals and essential roles of the IL plan. Avoid explaining how you plan to accomplish your mission. A mission statement:

- Includes your institutional definition of information literacy
- Complies with a standard or information literacy policies that the library uses
- Relates to the library and institutional missions
- Emphasizes the what rather than the how or the why
- States the participation of the different members of the community: librarians, faculty, staff and administration
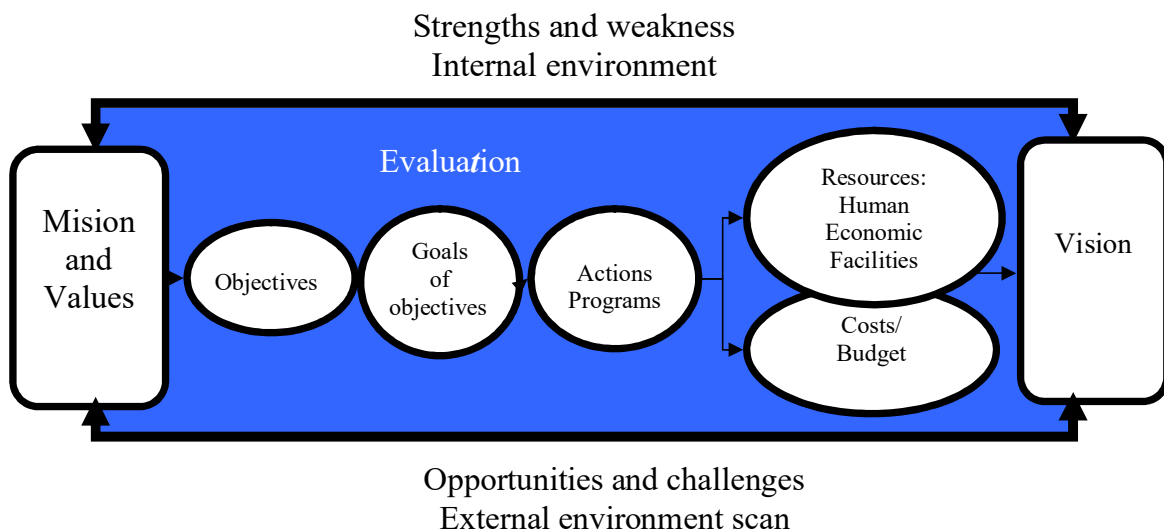
Vision. The vision should be encapsulated in a statement defining what the program expects to achieve in the future, whether it be short, mid- or long-term planning: 1, 3, or 5 years. The vision should:

- Include expected long-term outcomes of the information literacy program
- Be written in simple and concise language
- Emphasize results rather than how or why to achieve them

Justification. The justification for the program describes the reasons, needs and benefits of creating an information literacy program. The length of this section can be a page or more. It is crucial to convince potential parties to create the IL program. The justification section normally includes:

- Users' information literacy challenges, i.e., what IL do they need to master?
- Qualitative use of information by potential and real users
- Stated benefits of the learning processes for individuals and the institution Statistics to back up your arguments

Figure 5. Strategic Plan

Strengths and weakness
Internal environment

Opportunities and challenges
External environment scan

Strengths and weaknesses. In this section briefly analyze the capability of the library to carry out the information literacy plan. You should:

- List all the library's positive factors to ensure the program's success
- Analyze the human, economic and physical resources that are available in the library
- Include the challenges that the library has or may face in IL pursuits on a separate list
- Evaluate your weaknesses in terms of human, economic and physical resources available in the library for the IL program
- Write with positive statements, assuming that problems are opportunities for growth

Environmental scan. Analyze the internal and the external factors that contribute or limit the success of your information literacy plan. The environmental scan should:

- List the institutional factors that can help or limit the program

- Evaluate the external factors to your parent organization that, can contribute or reduce the possibilities of a successful information literacy program
- Be written using positive language

Strategies. Think about the general management approach or principles that you will use to conduct your program. Include:

- Budgetary strategies that you will use to fund the program.
- Descriptions of the efficient and effective strategies that you will apply to achieve the IL plan
- Relevant management principles that you have for the administration of the library

Objectives and goals. Here, describe your general goals. They could be categorized in different ways: an example is grouping them by type of users such as students, faculty and staff, or by disciplines and course grade levels. You can also group objectives by processes such as staff development, creation of IL courses, and infrastructure (adapting/creating an electronic classroom). In this section:

- Each goal could be divided into general and specific goals depending on the details that you may need or want to specify
- Under each objective you should state the goal or goals that you will achieve
- Goals should be specif*c*, on the other hand, keeping in mind and focused on the learning outcomes that you feel should be achieved by all the students, thereby maintaining a student-centered approach.

Actions. These are the main tasks to be completed to achieve each objective. In this section:

- State the different actions required to achieve each goal
- List one action or several, but try to be brief
- Write actions in the order they need to be completed

Resources / Requirements. To achieve your objectives and goals you need to specify the type of resources that you will need under each of your actions. In this section*:*

- Make a separate list of titles of actions, without any details
- Quantify under each action the number and type of human resources required
- Describe your physical requirements, such as a classroom, office space, furniture, equipment, etc.
- Describe the methodologies, training and management that you need to carry out your actions

Budget. Estimate the cost of each of the resources that you need to perform your actions. In this section:

- Estimate your costs
- Be flexible in estimating costs
- Figures determine how much funding the IL program needs
- Budget information determines the feasibility of the IL objectives and goals

Timetable. Create a table to summarize the deadlines to achieve the goals. This will be a tool for evaluating your IL program's progress. In this section:

- Create a matrix listing objectives subdivided by goals followed by the specific actions necessary to complete each goal
- Create columns for time units (days, weeks, months, years)
- Mark the date cell that corresponds to the expected start and/or finish date for each action
- Different colors could be used to mark beginning and ending dates

References

ACRL. (2003). *Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices: A Guideline.* Retrieved July 26, 2004, from the American Library Association Web site: http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/characteristics.htm

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