



Technology of Participation*

ToP

Strategic Planning Overview

TIME REQUIRED: 12 - 14 HOURS (OVER TWO OR MORE DAYS)

Technology of Participation Strategic Planning is a highly participatory process utilizing techniques developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs, a nonprofit organization active in 30 countries throughout the world. These techniques have been used in organizations of all sizes, from small grassroots groups to government agencies, and are known for building consensus and shared ownership among all stakeholders.

Prior to the strategic planning event, we meet with representatives from the leadership team to develop our “focus question”. This question identifies the key issues the group needs to address over the next 3 - 5 years, and serves as a guide to keep the strategic planning process on track. The strategic planning event begins with a group activity (for example, a historical review) to prepare the group for planning. The remainder of the planning process consists of a series of four workshops, as follows:

1. In our first workshop the group will work individually, in small teams and as a whole group to develop a shared “practical vision” of what will be in place in 3 – 5 years.
2. In the second workshop we look at the “underlying contradictions” that may keep the organization from achieving their vision. Underlying contradictions are blocks or barriers that must be acknowledged in order to move forward.
3. In our third workshop we develop specific action steps the organization will take that will deal with the underlying contradictions and move toward the practical vision. These steps are then grouped into two or three “strategic directions” that will keep the organization on course as they work to implement their plan.
4. In our final workshop, we decide on accomplishments for the first twelve months of the plan. We place accomplishments on a one-year implementation calendar, and participants self-assign to each task.

The key to the success of this process is the value we place on full participation. Our core values are participation and teamwork, individual and group creativity, honoring diverse perspectives and ideas and creating consensus without conflict. Throughout the entire process, all participants are treated with profound respect.