



# **Overview of Strategic Planning at the Environmental Protection Agency**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHAT IS STRATEGIC PLANNING?	1
WHY STRATEGIC PLANNING AT EPA?	2
HOW DO WE DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN?	4
IMPLEMENTATION	5
THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS FOR FY 1992 AND FY 1993	10
COMMON QUESTIONS	12
CREATING A DOCUMENTED PLAN	17
CALENDAR	25
SUGGESTED FORMAT	26
BIBLIOIGRAPHY	27
EXHIBITS:	
THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS	8
THE ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN	9
STRATEGIC PLANNING AFFECTS ALL ASPECTS OF THE ORGANIZATION	13

## WHAT IS STRATEGIC PLANNING?

EPA is using strategic planning to chart its course, set priorities,

make decisions, and manage resources to achieve the Agency's mission. Used frequently in the private sector and other government agencies, strategic planning means making choices about what we will and will not do -- choices regarding our purpose and activities. It is a management tool, a gradual and iterative process for effecting organizational change, and has the potential to involve all levels of management.

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Strategic planning is:

- \* A clear and simple vision of what we are striving to accomplish.
  - \* Choices about what we will and will not do -- choices regarding our purpose and activities.
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The goal of strategic planning is to improve the way EPA -- from existing programs to new initiatives, and from headquarters to regional offices -- does its job. The outcome of strategic planning is a shared vision of what we are striving to accomplish, and the will to take the steps necessary to get there. Strategic planning can be undertaken at the Agency, Region, program, office, division and branch levels.

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Thinking strategically requires questioning assumptions, and taking nothing for granted.

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The EPA strategic planning process is linked to the budget formulation process, so that strategic decisions drive the distribution of funds. It also links to everyday management decisions, because it underlies the setting of priorities and the allocation of scarce human and financial resources. Operational planning translates the themes and vision of the strategic plan into organizational reality.

## WHY STRATEGIC PLANNING AT EPA?

Administrator William Reilly initiated the strategic planning process in 1989 to set clear priorities and effectively manage the challenges facing

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The challenges facing EPA are enormous, and it is essential that the Agency set its own agenda and keep its own scorecard. We must make decisions while looking to the future rather than to the past.

EPA. The effort was launched to help us set a thoughtful and responsible course for the Agency over the long term, one that is influenced less by specific crises and more by professional judgment regarding actions that are likely to bring the greatest benefit over time.

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Successfully implemented, strategic planning can influence the Agency in many ways. For example, strategic planning can help us to focus first on areas of the greatest risk and risk reduction potential, and to integrate pollution prevention techniques into our decision making. It can help us think across statutes in terms of tangible environmental results. Furthermore, strategic planning can help direct budgetary decisions, and determine, anticipate, and meet human resource needs. It can help direct research priorities, focus management information systems, develop regulatory agendas and priorities, and assess and meet statutory requirements. It will help us communicate the results of our work to those in and outside the Agency (including EPA HQ, EPA Regions, States, Congress, environmental groups and industry.).

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Strategic planning directs our major activities.

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Strategic planning can be the linchpin of good public sector management because it provides the kind of focus that accomplishment and performance require in a large organization. While good strategic planning is very difficult, the barriers to developing a useful strategic plan are not insurmountable.

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**Strategic planning will help EPA:**

- o Focus on risk and risk reduction potential.
  - o Establish priorities and set future course.
  - o Allocate resources cost-effectively.
  - o Anticipate and meet human resource needs.
  - o Direct research and development priorities.
  - o Participate more effectively in the regulatory development and legislative processes.
  - o Integrate cross-cutting themes, like preventing pollution, strengthening enforcement, and building international leadership into everyday decision-making.
  - o Communicate effectively with internal and outside constituencies.
  - o Break down institutional barriers and bureaucratic logjams, and identify and resolve problems.
  - o Turn ideas into organizational realities.
  - o Get environmental results.
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## HOW DO WE DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN?

The general framework (see Exhibit 1) for a strategic plan has six interwoven, dynamic parts:

1. Mission: Define our purpose, or mission: What services do we (the unit doing the planning) offer? What is our business?
2. Critical Issues Assessment: Allows us to develop an understanding of our organization, the environment in which it functions, and issues which affect performance -- all crucial information to planning for the future. It seeks to answer questions such as: What are our strengths and weaknesses? Opportunities? Threats? Who are major stakeholders?
3. Goals and Objectives: Articulate our goals (to accomplish our mission), and objectives (more specific, to achieve goals).
4. Strategies: Use knowledge of organizational strengths and weaknesses and external constraints (critical issues) to develop strategies (also referred to as strategic options, policy options, choices or approaches) to meet goals and objectives. What alternative policies are available, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
5. Decision and Action: Decide which strategy(ies) to pursue, and determine the specific activities required to implement it (them). What mix of activities meets our goals and objectives, and is the most practical course of action given what we know about our organization? Does the course of action we have chosen take into account our expectations regarding the future?
6. Monitoring and Modification: Monitor activities and adjust strategies, objectives or goals as necessary, on a regular basis. Update critical issues assessment to account for changing circumstances.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

As the first step in a management process, strategic planning needs to be supported by an integrated management system that ensures accountability, and continual monitoring of results. Many strategic planning efforts derail when it comes to putting them into practice. When

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Strategic planning means developing a process, and carrying it through from conception to results.

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strategies lack the understanding, support and commitment of key players, or where organizations are not equipped to implement them, they end up on a shelf, victims of paper rather than living processes. Writing the plan is only one step; changing the way an organization like EPA does business as a result of

the plan is a much more involved process. It is therefore important to focus on the process by which strategic planning evolves.

The following identifies four key components of successful implementation:

- o TOP LEVEL SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT
- o FULL PARTICIPATION OF DECISION MAKERS
- o COMMUNICATION OF PURPOSE, PROCESS, AND RESULTS TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE AGENCY
- o COMMITMENT AND FLEXIBILITY TO SEE THINGS THROUGH



## **LEADERSHIP**

Top level involvement and support are crucial to a successful strategic planning process. A strong leader sets the tone for changing organizational culture, providing clear direction for future accomplishments and ensuring accountability. He/she convenes, and sets the boundaries of, the strategic planning process. By consistently emphasizing the importance of making choices and setting priorities, top level management can create conditions conducive to change, and amenable to taking risks. This is true whether the strategic planning effort is being undertaken at the Agency, Region, program, office, division or branch level.

## **PARTICIPATION**

The key to successful planning often lies in determining who should participate and how. The primary responsibility for developing strategy

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"The notion that an effective strategy can be constructed by someone in an ivory tower is totally bankrupt" Business Week  
9/17/84

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belongs to those managers directly responsible for implementation. The critical role of non-line staff is to facilitate the process whereby decision makers learn to approach their responsibilities strategically.

Developing capacity for strategic thinking is relevant to individuals at all levels of the organization. It is

therefore important to include a broad spectrum of participants in strategic planning efforts. Participation has a large impact on the quality of decisions and ownership in them, and also reduces resistance to change. Who has information that would be useful to plan development? Who has a stake in implementation? Who could make the planning effort succeed or fail? In government organizations, strategies that call for changes in policy and operations may require support from outside officials.

## COMMUNICATION

Communicating the purpose, process, and results of the strategic plan to the entire organization is key to its success and acceptance.

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We need a shared understanding of what we are doing and why.

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Recording, tracking, and communicating decisions therefore deserve considerable attention. Everyone in EPA, or in the unit undertaking a strategic plan, needs a broad understanding of why there is a strategy, why it is this strategy, and how it affects what the organization does.

Continual reinforcement of the "strategic thinking" message is critical to avoid reverting back to the old way of doing things. In addition, the focus provided by the strategic plan will improve communication of organizational purpose and goals both inside and outside the Agency.

## COMMITMENT AND FLEXIBILITY

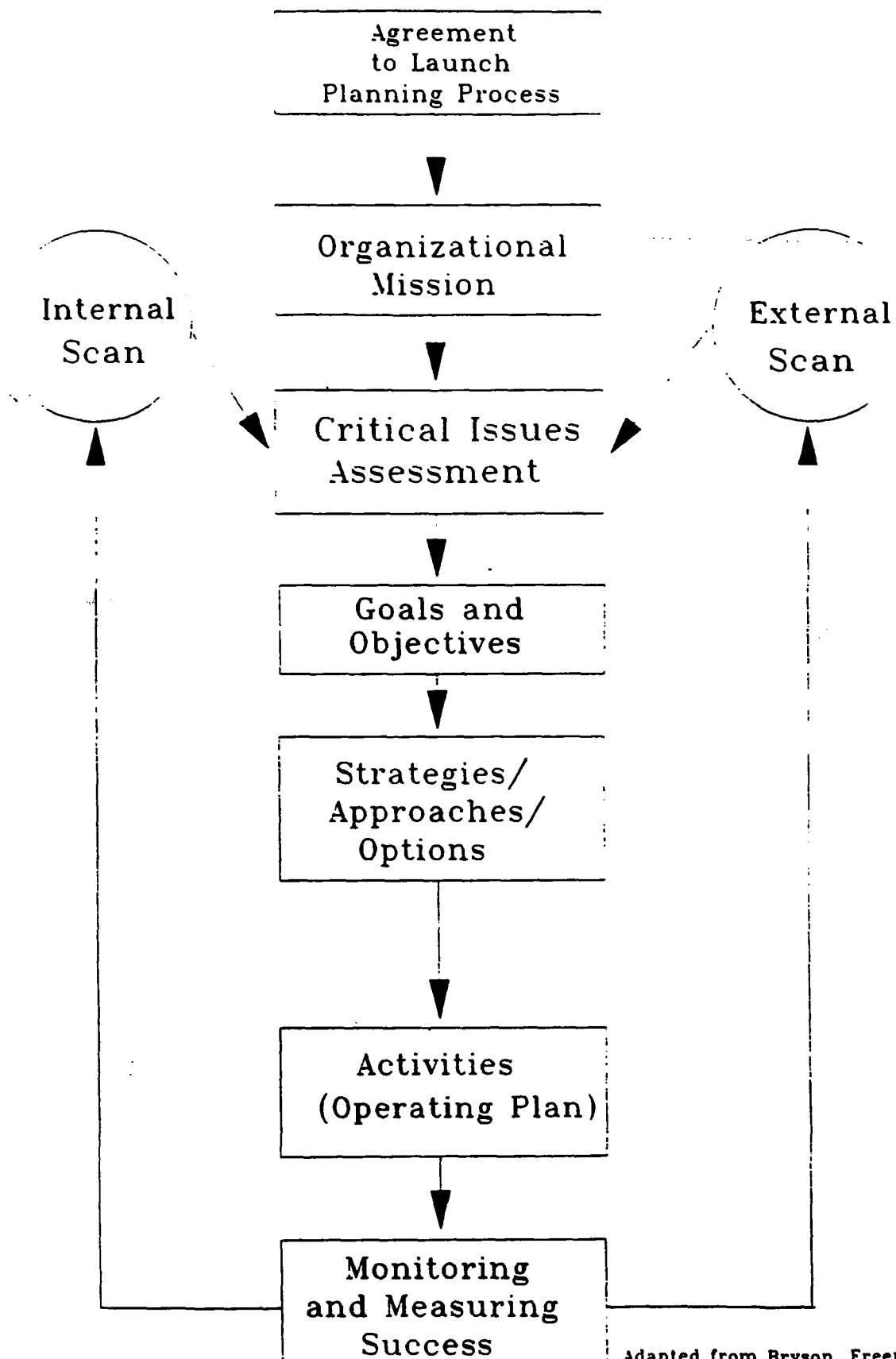
Strategic planning is DYNAMIC, ONGOING, ITERATIVE. It therefore requires adjustment, and a hefty dose of stick-to-it-iveness. Not only must the leaders of the strategic planning initiative demonstrate constancy of purpose, but also they must be openly amenable to change. Strategic planning is not a quick fix: rather it is a patient and disciplined process for setting a deliberate course of action. The process also must be viewed as systematic and fair.

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With constancy of purpose, instability and change are not threats to the strategic planning process.

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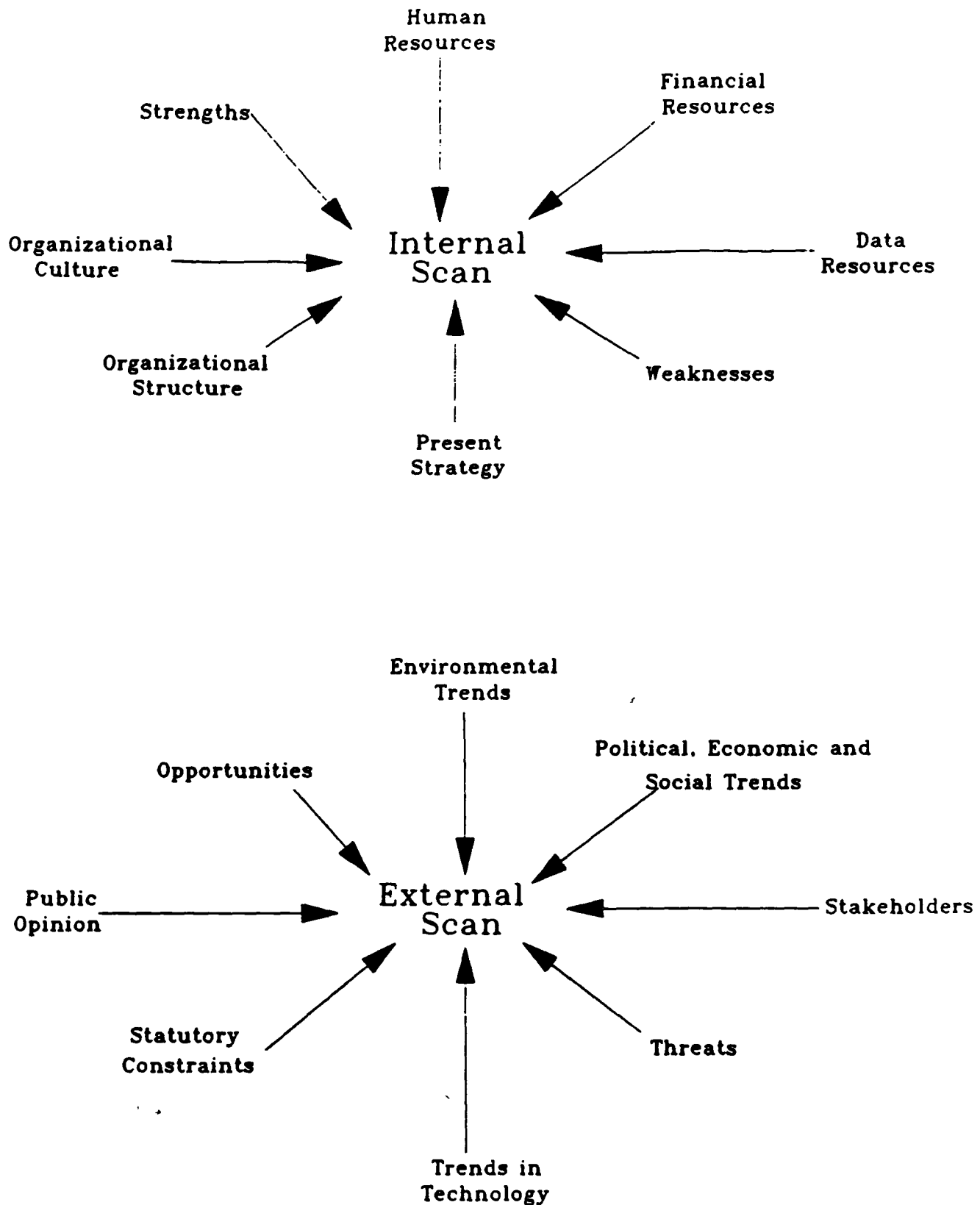
Exhibit 1  
THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



Adapted from Bryson, Freeman & Roering, 1986

Exhibit 2

## CRITICAL ISSUES ASSESSMENT



## THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS FOR FY 1992 AND FY 1993

### EPA's Strategic Planning Process<sup>1</sup>

In November 1989, the media offices - Air and Radiation, Water, Solid Waste and Emergency Response, and Pesticides and Toxic Substances - completed four-year strategic plans outlining their goals, objectives and activities. These major efforts brought together managers across each program to discuss future direction, priorities, and problems.

The agenda of the 1990 Annual Planning Meeting, held at Easton, MD in late February 1990, was built almost entirely around the four media strategic plans. In addition, Regions 1, 3 and 10 were invited to present their risk-based priorities and the results of their comparative risk analyses. The meeting itself was an important step toward achieving implementation of the four year plans. Work groups for each media, made up of managers from national program offices, support offices and regions, identified high priority areas, which will be emphasized in the FY 1992 budget. To date, this process has provided direction for budget formulation, and for allocating our limited resources to the areas of greatest risk and risk reduction potential, as well as a new context for discussing our budget with OMB and the Congress.

The first round of strategic planning that the Agency undertook was designed to be media based and to influence the FY 1992 budget. As we look toward FY 1993, the strategic planning process will have broader objectives, and proceed on three levels: media planning, support office planning and regional planning. As strategic planning develops at the Agency, efforts are continuing on many other levels. We are linking planning, budgeting and management systems and processes to assure that priorities are reflected in practice. We are developing Agency-wide plans for global warming and enforcement, and for other cross-cutting and multi-media issues. The Agency is also re-examining its Annual Guidance process and program tracking systems to help them reflect the results of strategic thinking and management. Broad participation in strategic planning efforts across the Agency, and coordination among these efforts, will be critical to our success.

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<sup>1</sup> Past EPA Planning Efforts: Traditionally, planning at EPA has meant limited discussion of long term goals, objectives and measures of progress. Budgets are often developed on the basis of past years - without systematic review in the context of environmental priorities, risk, risk reduction potential, and other important Agency themes. This type of national planning and budgeting may also limit the recognition of region-specific problems. It may also unintentionally protect the status quo. Administrator Reilly is using the strategic planning process to equip EPA to meet the future.

Among those strategic planning initiatives underway and planned are:

- o Refining the media specific plans for greater consistency in the comprehensiveness and quality of the media planning efforts, including:
  - Fuller development of strategies for reaching program goals and objectives. These strategies will address the critical issues that we identify that affect each program's ability to achieve its goals, including operational and external constraints.
  - More explicit plans for implementation of strategies, including their implications for other EPA offices and regions, states and other federal agencies.
  - Stronger development of indicators and other measures of environmental impact, making explicit how programmatic success will be measured.
- o Launching strategic planning for each support office (OARM, ORD, OLA, OE, OGC, OPPE, OROSLR, OCLA, and OCPA) that will take advantage of the lessons that the media offices have learned about strategic planning to date, and integrate support office efforts with those of each media. These support office plans will be developed on the same schedule as the media plans (i.e., targeted completion by November 30, 1990).
- o Identifying regional priorities, recognizing regional differences, and involving the Regions more actively in headquarter's planning process. The regional planning process consists of two main components: comparative risk analysis for priority setting, and strategic planning. Regions I, III and X have completed comparative risk analyses and FY 1992 operating plans, and will be developing four year strategic plans for their highest priority problems. Regions II, IV, V, VI, VII and VIII will be completing comparative risk studies by November, 1990, and will identify areas of potential investment and disinvestment for FY 1993 budget formulation. These Regions will follow the same process as Regions I, III and X did in preparing for the last Annual Planning Meeting, specifically identifying priority risk reduction opportunities that will not be addressed by the national strategy. These proposals shall be reviewed for incorporation into the FY 1993 budget. Four year strategic plans for highest priority areas will therefore be developed by Regions II, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, and IX as part of the FY 1994 cycle.

## COMMON QUESTIONS

### How does strategic planning tie in with the budget process?

Exhibit 3 shows how strategic planning is related to the annual budget process, program accountability, and other components of the EPA management system. To be successful, strategic planning must have an impact on the Agency's resource allocation decisions. Basically, areas of emphasis and de-emphasis identified during strategic planning efforts are reflected in program budgets. For 1992, for example, the Deputy Administrator requested that 1992 budget proposals be developed that reflect the program priorities outlined at the Easton Annual Planning Meeting. Similarly, Regions I, III and X identified areas of increased or decreased emphasis that will be reflected in national program budgets.

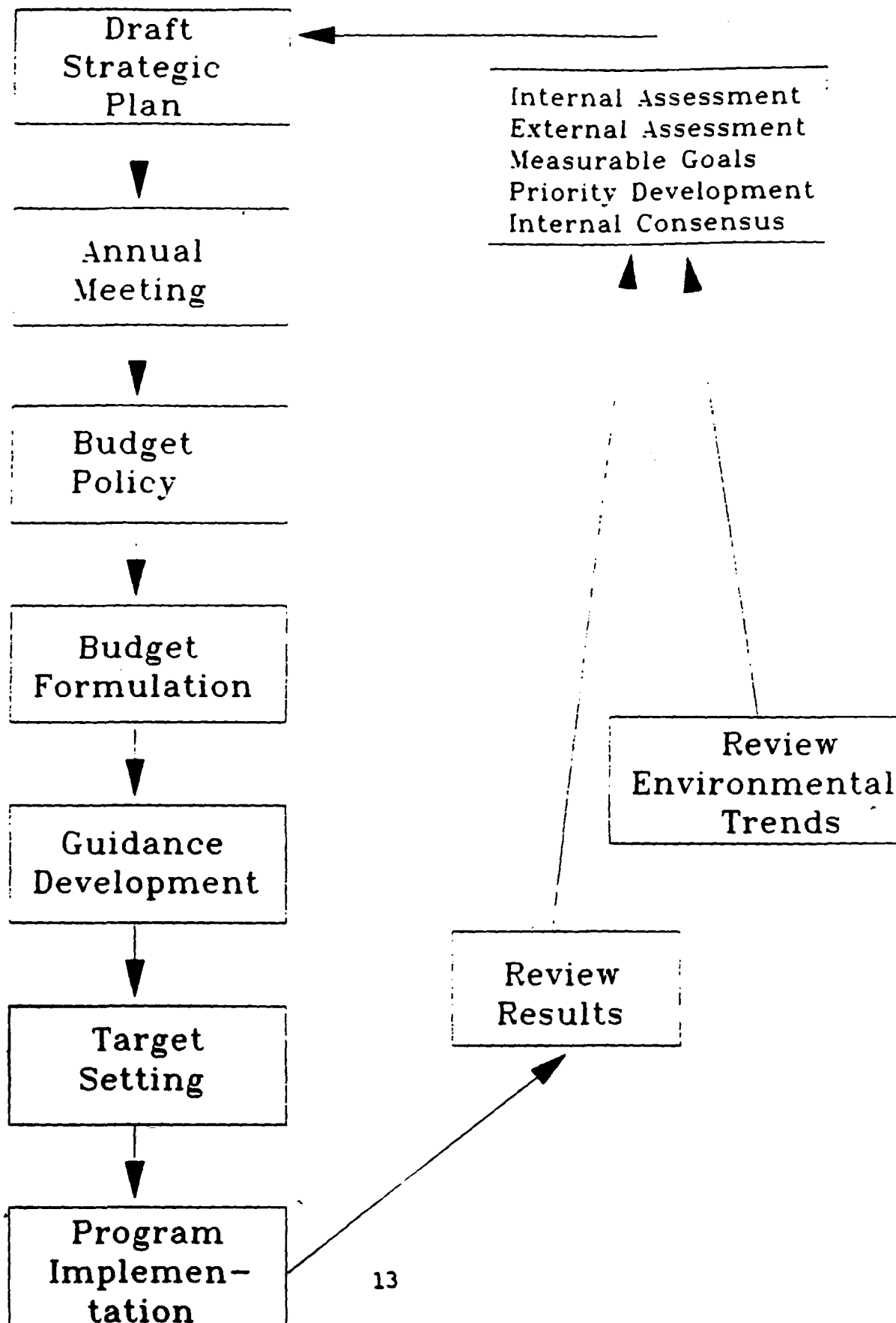
### How are Regions involved in strategic planning?

Regional involvement in EPA strategic planning takes place on many levels. National media programs, for example, have been asked to ensure regional participation in development of their plans. The "Lead Region" mechanism provides a mechanism for Regions to affect the planning process at Headquarters Regions themselves are undertaking strategic planning efforts. As described above, these begin with comparative risk analyses, and then focus on developing strategies for high risk areas. Long term strategies will give the Regions, states, and local government a picture of where EPA is headed, and how and when it is going to get there. The goal is to develop a national strategy with full regional input. Once national strategies that focus on environmental results and accommodate regional and state concerns have been developed, Headquarters should find it easier to provide flexibility for inclusion of Region-specific high risk priorities where the situation warrants.

### How does strategic planning relate to program accountability?

Because strategic plans are a statement about the direction an organization -- whether Region, Office, Division, Branch or Agency -- has chosen to take, they are useful in assessing progress. Quantitative measures of performance should also have qualitative components, and should be developed to create incentives that bolster program results, not hinder them. Through a regular process of revisiting the plans, coupled with the Agency's other program monitoring and evaluation tools, strategic planning can be translated into results.

Exhibit 3  
STRATEGIC PLANNING AFFECTS ALL ASPECTS OF THE ORGANIZATION





Strategic plans identify goals for a program area, then measurable objectives to reach within a certain time period (four years), and indicators by which to measure progress towards those goals. Program accountability must deal with both specific actions taken to positively affect progress towards goals, and the environmental indicators which indicate how much progress has been made. It is important to know when progress is being made, as well as when strategies or activities undertaken with the best intentions seem not to make a difference. This may indicate that the strategy or activity is flawed, that more research is needed to establish better indicators, or that the monitoring system needs improvement. Both success and lack of success are equally important to effective management of EPA.

#### What is the OPPE role in strategic planning?

The Deputy Administrator has designated the Strategic Planning and Management Division to help staff strategic planning across the Agency. This Division is therefore available to answer questions, provide guidance and technical assistance, and facilitate the process in whatever way they can. For example, if a media office wants to know what part of their previous plan needs more attention, OPPE can work with the media policy office to establish specific needs. Perhaps a support office wants advice on what is an appropriate way measurable objective, or who to contact for help in developing indicators (which may be administrative). OPPE staff can provide the support office with advice and guidance on how to develop their own approach to answering these questions. Maybe a Regional office wants help in developing their comparative risk study or strategic plan. OPPE can find appropriate help for them in the Region, or provide technical assistance in person.

In particular, the Planning and Management Branch will serve as liaison to National Program Offices in the development of their strategies. This branch also staffs the Agency management systems, and will be instrumental in reworking these systems to reflect the results of strategic planning. The Regional and State Planning Branch serves as liaison to Regions and states in the development of risk-based planning, and its incorporation into Headquarters' budgets. This branch also assists Regions in conducting comparative risk analyses, and will continue to provide guidance on this subject. The Environmental Results and Forecasting Branch provides technical assistance to National Programs and other headquarters offices on the development of indicators for measuring environmental results. This branch is also developing expertise in environmental forecasting to help guide long-term Agency planning, and will be assisting Regions in developing indicators in the future.

What is the Agency-wide plan, and isn't it redundant with other efforts?

EPA is engaged in an Agency-wide planning process that is occurring on a number of different levels. The development of a specific Agency-wide plan is currently under consideration. One view of the Agency-wide plan is that it is several things rolled into one. First, it will articulate a vision for the Agency, and provide an overarching framework for the planning efforts of program offices, support offices and Regions, to: a shared mission that will motivate our activities into the next century. It will be a statement of overarching goals, and summarize the highest priority environmental problem areas, and media strategies. It will also be a vehicle for considering multi-office environmental problems, such as Climate Change and Groundwater, which might not be adequately addressed otherwise. Finally, it will be a concise summary of agency directions and policies that will be used for broad discussion and support inside and outside the Agency with our various stakeholders.

How long should our strategic plan be?

The Deputy Administrator has asked that plans be limited to approximately 20 pages per AAship -- the purpose of strategic planning is to set priorities for future action, not to produce a lengthy treatise. Each strategic plan should be only as long as it needs to be to get its message across.

Do we have to rewrite our strategic plan every year?

Absolutely not. The Administrator wants to have strategic plans developed more comprehensively and consistently across the Agency. This may take two or three attempts to get different parts of the Agency together on the same effort the same year. Those parts which have been completed and fulfill general needs of a strategic plan need only be updated annually by a systematic review by senior managers. The media offices already have most parts of their strategic plans established, and need only revise certain areas or fill in some missing pieces. The support offices and some Regional offices will be joining the media offices in this year's cycle. Afterwards, the Administrator may decide that other support offices, Regional offices, or special programs may join the previous ones in developing strategic plans. Once everyone is on the same wavelength, the Administrator may determine that the plans do not need annual updates as much as there needs to be clear annual operating guidance to implement the longer term plans. When the four or more year cycle is over, then the Administrator may decide a whole new effort is needed, or at least the plans need updating to their new timeframe.

How will states and the general public be involved?

This is a question to which all the answers have not been worked out yet. The Agency serves several publics: Congress, state and local governments, the business community, environmental groups, and the general public. From the CEO of a major corporation to a housewife, from the director of a state environmental agency to an Earth Day volunteer, we all have an interest in and concern about the environment. We want to provide for the involvement of all interested parties in an appropriate way, and our strategy for doing this is currently being developed. We welcome your suggestions.

You mentioned Congress. What does Congress say about EPA's strategic planning efforts?

The Administrator has kept Congress informed of our strategic planning work. In particular, he has discussed our approach to addressing environmental problems by their comparative risks, and targeting our scarce resources towards those high priority problems with the greatest risk reduction potential. Congressional committee members have expressed their strong support for this approach, and are interested to learn more. The Administrator is very hopeful that this strategic planning approach will help address concerns about Agency direction, while garnering broader support from Congress.

## **CREATING A DOCUMENTED PLAN**

An organization undertakes strategic planning to define its mission, establish goals, set priorities, and develop and implement strategies for achieving those goals. At EPA, strategic planning is taking place on many levels: the organizational unit undertaking strategic planning may be large, such as an entire agency, program or regional office, or small, such as a branch or division. Regardless of the size of the planning unit, the strategic planning process moves through the same series of steps, depicted in Exhibit 1:

- o Decide to launch strategic planning, and "plan the planning".
- o Define organizational purpose, or mission: What services does it offer? What is its business?
- o Identify and assess the critical issues affecting organizational performance. Evaluate both internal and external influences, and modify mission if necessary. What are our organization's strengths and weaknesses? Opportunities and threats? Who are our clients? Major stakeholders? Supporters? Detractors?
- o Articulate goals (to accomplish mission), and objectives (shorter term components of goals).
- o Develop strategies/options/approaches to meet goals and objectives: What alternatives are available for each service we wish to provide? What mix of activities is optimal?
- o Decide which approach to pursue, and determine the specific activities necessary to do so.
- o Monitor results and modify plan where necessary.

In addition to the descriptions below, the Strategic Planning and Management Division is developing materials to help facilitate each of these steps.

### **Plan the Planning**

Begin with an effort to "plan the planning". This is an important step to develop consensus among an organization's leaders regarding the purpose of the plan, and to provide participants with a working definition of strategic planning, a clear sense of what it involves, and a preliminary timetable.

Strategic planning embraces a range of approaches that vary in applicability to the public sector and EPA. It is NOT a single concept, procedure or tool. The emphases of an Agency-wide plan will differ from those of regional, program, or office plans. The process for a nascent program will differ substantially from that of a mature one. A strategic plan will also vary according to the objectives of its formulators. Strategic planning can involve major change. If leaders of the strategic planning process are only willing to entertain minor variations on existing themes, strategic planning is probably a waste of time.

There are important lessons to be learned from beginning strategic planning from scratch and then adding reality's constraints. For example, programs might reach a better understanding of their barriers to progress. Strategic planning that ignores boundaries set by legislation and organizational structure may be better suited to newly emerging programs, and to programs approaching reauthorization.

At EPA, organizational units do not always have sole responsibility for addressing discrete environmental problems. It therefore may be difficult for these organizations to adopt purely problem-based approaches to strategic planning. For example, global warming falls under the jurisdiction of numerous offices at EPA; several offices within and outside the Office of Water deal with non-point source pollution; and multiple parties in the Office of Air and Radiation work on toxic air pollutants. While cross-cutting issues are of growing importance and interest to EPA and its constituents, the institution is more likely to respond to a strategic planning approach that is organized around existing programs. Nevertheless, program oriented plans need to be explicit about the problems they are intended to address, and plans that are organized around particular environmental problems should consider programmatic constraints as well. In any case, well developed communication and coordination across the Agency is essential.

### Mission

The mission statement, which describes an organization's business in broad and timeless terms, serves as the focal point for the entire plan. It addresses what the organization intends to do, and for whom, and specifies the major philosophical premises that drive operations. The rest of the strategic planning process flows from the mission statement, which serves to integrate the different elements of both the organization and the plan. Mission statements vary in length and complexity, ranging from a few sentences to several paragraphs. Because they provide focus, they are generally quite brief.

A shared sense of mission is important to an organization for a number of

reasons. It enables members of an organization to focus their energies, and provides a point of reference for major decisions. It ensures consistency of purpose, and helps gain support of individuals and groups outside of the organization who are important to success.

The first step toward developing a shared mission statement is to identify those individuals who will participate in its development. Typically, this group is drawn from an organization's top management. This group meets to discuss the format and components of the mission statement.

There are several questions that could form the basis for discussions of the mission statement:

- o Why do we (Agency, division or branch; the organization developing the strategic plan) exist? What is our purpose?
- o What are our services and products?
- o What problems do we seek to address?
- o What will our services and products be in the future?
- o How might the organization change?
- o What are our philosophy and core values?

The mission statement meeting may either begin from scratch, or managers may each be asked to think about the above questions in advance, and draft mission statements that then serve as the basis for discussion. Once drafted, the mission statement should be circulated for comment.

### Identification and Assessment of Critical Issues

In this step in the strategic planning process, participants identify and evaluate factors both internal and external to the organization that might affect its future, referred to here as critical issues assessment. Also referred to, with slight variations, as an environmental scan, situation analysis, critical factor analysis, and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), this analysis allows us to develop an understanding of our organization, the environment in which it must function, and the issues that affect its performance - all crucial information to planning for the future.

There are two fundamental parts of critical issues assessment:

- o **External Scan:** Begin the critical issues assessment by examining the outside world. Who are our clients? Major stakeholders? Supporters? Detractors? What are the opportunities available to our organization? What threatens our future success? This analysis might factor in public opinion, political agendas, legal mandates and projected environmental and economic conditions, and make explicit other expectations regarding the future. For example, the critical issues assessment could reflect shifts over time in EPA's regulatory mandate.
- o **Internal Scan:** Then consider internal aspects of the organization that affect its ability to act. What are our organization's strengths and weaknesses? This analysis might address resource constraints, leadership, organizational culture, policy consensus, attitudes toward change, staff capacity, etc.

In both cases, ask:

- o What are the critical issues that affect our performance?
- o Which elements of the current internal and external environment are most important?
- o Which elements are likely to facilitate or impede consensus or problem solving?
- o What forces are at work that might change the environment in which we operate?
- o How might future forces change the nature of the issue at hand?

Collecting and evaluating information to help understand the factors that influence our organization, depicted in Exhibit 2, is perhaps the most time-consuming part of the strategic planning process. Careful identification and assessment of critical issues allows the organization to identify those factors that are most important to address in the strategic plan.

## **Goals**

Goals are general statements of what an organization must accomplish to achieve its mission. They are generally stated in broad and timeless terms, and may describe, for example, prospective levels of attainment (e.g., to substantially reduce

automobile emissions) or conditions to be pursued (e.g., to promote technology transfer). Goals portray where the organization wants to be in the future. From this point, the strategic plan works backwards to determine what needs to transpire in the short term (objectives and activities).

Goals are developed from careful review of the mission statement, and modified to reflect the findings of the critical issues assessment. They should be few: according to one strategic planning expert, three to six goals is plenty. Too many goals can diffuse organizational focus and impede the achievement of its mission.

To develop goals that are attainable and of use to the organization, it is useful to keep in mind the following questions:

- o Is the goal measurable and verifiable?
- o Is the goal feasible?
- o Is the goal flexible?
- o Is the goal consistent with the rest of the strategic plan?
- o Is the goal consistent with our knowledge about what other parts of the organization are trying to achieve?

## Objectives

Objectives are short term accomplishments that contribute to realizing each goal - for example, if the goal is to reduce emissions, an objective might be to reduce industrial emissions by 10% in two years. When formulating objectives, the following questions might prove useful:

- o Will achieving the objectives help to achieve the goal?
- o Are the objectives measurable?
- o What time constraints should the objectives involve?
- o Can activities be developed for each objective?

Like other parts of strategic planning, goals and objectives need to be developed, or at least actively endorsed, by the organization's leaders. These managers might be presented with a set of proposed goals to stimulate their thinking prior to



meeting to develop them further. It is possible for the development of objectives to necessitate modifying goals.

## Strategies

Strategic options, approaches, or simply, strategies, describe an organization's overall approach to achieving its mission, goals and objectives. For example, a few general strategies for protecting sensitive lands might be to promulgate new regulations, enforce existing ones, provide public information, or some combination thereof. These options identify what the organization can do to meet the challenges it will face in the future. They are at the heart of the strategic planning process, for they point to fundamental policy choices that the organization must make regarding its future direction.

There is not a one-to-one correspondence of goals and objectives to strategies. For example, it may be possible to have a strategy that addresses numerous objectives. Careful assessment of an organization's strengths and weaknesses, and factors that effect the probability of its success (see critical issues assessment, above) inform the choice among strategic options.

Developing an explicit strategy forces managers to consider how external events and trends, and internal characteristics, could affect the organization in the future. Without these options, managers are more likely to overlook obstacles that might stymie attainment of goals.

Among the questions that might be useful in developing strategies are:

- o What are the policy options available to us? (This is an opportunity to think creatively about alternatives).
- o What are the likely pitfalls inherent in each option if it is chosen?
- o What are the likely benefits of each?

## Activities

Activities are specific programmatic actions and tactics that are implied by each strategy, and undertaken to achieve goals and objectives. Together, activities comprise an operating plan.

The following questions may facilitate the development of activities:

- o Given your choice of strategy (i.e., to build state capacity), what specific actions are required to achieve each objective?
- o Who is responsible for each activity?
- o What resources are available to ensure follow-through?
- o How will progress be monitored?
- o Do the activities achieve the objective? Do they reflect the organization's strategic choices?

#### Monitoring, Follow-Up and Modification

Measures, or environmental indicators, provide a means of tracking progress, and of modifying components of the plan to reflect changes in operating environment. They identify problem areas, and can be used to communicate program accomplishments. Measures demonstrate the link between an organization's activities and its mission. The most useful indicators, admittedly difficult to develop, demonstrate a causal relationship between EPA actions and environmental results. STARS is one method that EPA uses to measure success.

Answering the following questions can help refine a list of proposed measures:

- o What information that could measure progress is currently being collected?
- o Is this information readily accessible in a form matching the organization's needs? Are data available consistently across regions?
- o Will data be available over time?
- o Are data accurate, precise and complete?
- o Where data is not available, can it be collected without excessively burdening its source?
- o How might measures unexpectedly influence behavior? For example, will a critical aspect of a program that is not measured be ignored?

- o How much will it cost? How long will the measure take to develop?
- o What are our constituents looking for to show our progress?

Follow-up, including sound environmental indicators, periodic monitoring and other activities, is necessary to assure that the plan is implemented, and that it is altered over time to reflect changing realities. Without a concerted follow-up, the strategic plan is likely to stray off course, be forgotten, or simply sit on a shelf. The planning process should be repeated every few years to incorporate changes to the organization's internal and external environment. Many organizations update their plans annually.

## **Schedule**

### **1990**

- June** Deputy Administrator issues "next steps" call letter and guidance.
- OPPE provides additional guidance to program offices, other headquarters offices, and regions.
- June &  
July** Media offices, cross-cutting offices and regions begin planning cycle.
- Technical assistance available from OPPE.
- August** Cross-cutting offices and regions work with program offices to ensure consistency.
- September 30** Drafts of program office, other headquarters office and Regions I, III and X strategic plans, and Regions II, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII and IX preliminary rankings due to Deputy Administrator.
- November 30** Strategic plans and regional rankings due.

### **1991**

- January 15** Implications of strategic plans for FY 1993 program priorities due.
- February 25** Annual planning meeting.

**EPA STRATEGIC PLANS**  
**BASIC COMPONENTS/SUGGESTED FORMAT**

- I. Mission Statement**
  
- II. Critical Issues Assessment**
  
- III. Goals and Objectives**
  
- IV. Strategies and Policy Options**
  
- V. Environmental Indicators**

**\* For details regarding each of these basic components, please refer to the attached overview and contact OPPE's Strategic Planning and Management Division (382-5449) for additional materials and information.**

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