

# The Board's Role in Strategic Planning Training Discussion Guide

## Purpose

The Discussion Guide is designed as an opportunity for participants to expand on what they learned in the microlearning module, [The Board's Role in Strategic Planning](#). The discussion guide can assist facilitators in engaging board members in dialogue after they have viewed the module. Keep in mind that sharing takeaways with others is a key method to remember what is learned and inspire new ideas.

## Let's get started!

As you begin, be mindful of time and be sure to know everyone's name and title. Facilitators should remind board members that there is always more to learn about nonprofit governance and encourage participants to ask questions at any point. If conducting a virtual training, consider using polls or the chat feature to gather feedback and engage your audience. If questions have been submitted ahead of time, use them as conversation starters or include them in the appropriate topic areas. As you go through the discussion guide, confirm that the questions have been addressed before going to the next question. Lastly, write down any follow-up questions that may be asked.

To kick off discussion, invite members to share a *one-two minute reaction* to the microlearning module.

- What do you think about your role in strategic planning?
- What are the concepts you identified in the module that you feel confident in applying?
- What concepts do you find challenging and may need help with?

## Discussion

After initial reactions are shared, acknowledge everyone's comments and highlight topics from the module that participants mentioned. Remind the group that the board plays a very important role in strategic planning. Then process what was learned in the module using the following questions to prompt participant feedback:

- **The Board's Roles and Responsibilities**

Health center boards have many roles and responsibilities. Remember that the board must make sure the health center follows the state and federal laws and the program requirements for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Health Center Program.

- What questions do you have about meeting the HRSA requirement for strategic planning and the HRSA program requirement for this responsibility? Talk about them as a group.

- Briefly look over the requirements under Chapter 19, Board Authority, of the HRSA's Health Center Program Compliance Manual. New board members will want to know where to find this information. Find the language about strategic planning close the bottom of the **Requirements** section and talk about this:

*The health center governing board must provide direction for long-range planning, including but not limited to identifying health center priorities and adopting a three-year plan for financial management and capital expenditures.*

- What does the requirement say under **Demonstrating Compliance** about the responsibility of the board for strategic planning? How often must a health center complete a strategic planning process?

- **The Board's Role in Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning means creating the vision for the future of the health center and setting the goals and objectives of the organization. The board works with the CEO and staff to develop, carry out, and monitor strategic planning. Discuss how these things apply to your health center.

- How and when does your board work on strategic planning?
- Who are the people on staff and on your board who take the lead in strategic planning?
- Does your board have a strategic planning committee?
- Do members of the community or consultants help your board with the strategic planning responsibility?
- Do members of your board take part in a retreat to work on strategic planning?

- **Preparing for Strategic Planning**

Health center boards complete a needs assessment every three years, (see [HRSA Health Center Compliance Manual, Chapter 19.](#)) and the information gathered can help paint a picture of how the health center could plan its future services, locations, and initiatives. Sometimes, an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) is done during planning. Discuss how your health center prepares for this process.

- What does your board do to prepare for planning?
- What documents does your board review?
- What types of reports does your board usually ask for when working on strategic planning?

- **The Process of Strategic Planning**

Health centers form their strategic plans using many different methods. One way is to use the following steps:

- Goal setting: These are the objectives you want to achieve that can be measured and planned out using action items. What is an example of a health center goal that is in your board's strategic plan right now?
- Strategy formation: Sometimes known as creating tactics, this means creating projects and lists of tasks to complete a goal. What actions will we take to achieve our goals?
- Strategy implementation: Who are the teams and team members responsible for completing the tasks and starting the work?
- Strategy monitoring: How often does your board hear reports on the progress of your strategic plan objectives?

What step of strategic planning is your health center in right now? – goal setting, strategy formation, strategy implementation or strategy monitoring?

HRSA requires that strategic planning, at the very least, addresses financial management and capital expenditure needs. (See [HRSA Health Center Compliance Manual, Chapter 19.](#)) Good governance recommends that health center boards do more than the minimum strategic planning required by HRSA.

- Give an example of non-capital, non-financial goal that your health center has or could have in its strategic plan.

- **Questions for Board Members to Ask:**

Board members will find themselves asking questions of the CEO and staff to make sure that the strategic plan is being done well. Make sure you are having these discussions:

- Is the goal we are setting something we can complete?
- Are there goals in the plan that have gone off track? What can we do to bring them back on course?
- Are some goals getting more attention than others?
- What challenges are staff having in completing the strategic objectives?
- What targets in the strategic plan will be completed in this year?
- Should we make updates to the strategic plan?
- Are we making the impact we expected?
- What successes can we celebrate?



## Act

As a whole group, use this time to invite participants to share what they learned from the conversation – new insights, “aha” moments, more questions to consider. This is a good moment for members to share their takeaways and connect with one another.

- As a collective board, what are 1-2 things you can do now that will help you provide better strategic planning?
- Any takeaways from this discussion or module?

## Resources

Board authority for oversight of strategic planning and health center requirements are integrated within the [Health Center Program Compliance Manual](#) and the [Health Center Program Site Visit Protocol](#).

Access the Health Center Program Compliance Manual here:

- <https://bphc.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bphc/programrequirements/pdf/hc-compliance-manual.pdf>

Access the Health Center Program Compliance Manual in Spanish here:

- <https://bphc.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bphc/programrequirements/pdf/health-center-manual-spanish.pdf>

Access the Health Center Program Site Visit Protocol here:

- <https://bphc.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bphc/programrequirements/pdf/site-visit-protocol.pdf>