

Strategic planning and MDA



Jim Williams

“If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll end up someplace else.” —Yogi Berra

One of the more than 60 classes taught at NALC’s Leadership Academy is strategic planning for branch leaders. The purpose of the class is to introduce a basic planning model for potential leaders so that branches can make decisions in the present that fit into a longer range plan for the future. Too often, we make choices that are not necessarily in sync with any strategic plan. We’ve seen that dangerous type of folly play out every day when working for the USPS.

Many branches have either begun or completed their budgeting process for 2014. A budget is simply a strategic plan for the way we will spend our money over the next year.

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My article this month is geared toward asking branches to use the same type of planning that we do for our budget and apply it to community service. Specifically, how are we going to be successful in raising money for, and being involved with, our national charity, the Muscular Dystrophy Association?

So, what are the steps in a strategic plan? What factors do branch leaders need to evaluate in looking at the coming year(s)? A good planning process answers the following questions: 1) How do we know where we are going? 2) How do we evaluate our progress? and 3) How do we know if we succeed?

Of course, the beginning point is to have branch officers get together with the branch MDA coordinator and committee members who are responsible for MDA in your branch. The planning process starts with reviewing the purpose of NALC involvement with community service in the first place. The next step is to determine branch goals for the next one to five years. Has your branch set goals for MDA fundraising? Goals for strategic planning should be SMART. That is, they should be Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and have a Timetable.

Next, have a discussion about objectives and strategies to meet your goals. Objectives are specific statements of

what steps will be accomplished to reach your goal. Objectives will be necessary for each goal. They tell “what” you want to do, but not “how” you want to do it. Objectives will include words that indicate what will be done and words that help to measure the results of your efforts. Strategies are the “how to” for accomplishing the objectives. The strategies you develop will be based on the needs, information and goals identified by the group. Choose the strategies that will:

- Accomplish the objective.
- Be handled by your committee in a reasonable amount of time.
- Involve most of the people on your committee, plus other members and activists.
- Contribute to achieving your overall goal and purpose.

The next step in the strategic planning process is to develop and action plan. An action plan is a written outline that pulls all the pieces of your planning together. It includes specific tasks, times and assignments to each person about what needs to happen and when. For example, if your branch wanted to have a Texas hold-’em tournament in six months, each task would be assigned to an individual with a time deadline to accomplish it. The committee should make periodic checks on progress of the tasks. Questions to be asked include:

- Are we on schedule?
- Are our plans still feasible?
- Did we leave anything out?
- Have things come up that we did not anticipate? How did we handle them?
- Does new information suggest changes in strategy?

Finally, review your plan, objectives and strategy to make adjustments and improvements, if necessary.

Depending on what the evaluation shows, celebrate your accomplishments, make corrections and keep moving forward toward the goal. Then, next year about this time, do the whole process over again. If we can keep moving our strategic plan along, we will help MDA get ever closer to finding a cure and provide the help and hope the MDA families’ need. Thanks for all your work!