

Utah Conservation Districts Continuing Education

Charting Your
District's Course



What you'll learn in this module:

- Why is planning important?
- What are the elements of a strategic plan?
- How will resource assessment be used in district planning?
- What is an annual plan and how will it be used?

Planning overview

- Planning provides the foundation for conservation district programs and operations.
- The planning process broadly defines the vision of the future and then focuses on the steps that are needed to address specific goals and objectives.

Why plan?

- A conservation district without a plan is like being afloat without a boat.
- Where does your district want to go?
Can you get there?



Legal authority

Utah's conservation districts are legally defined in Utah Code, Special District, Title 17A-3, Part 8 (The Conservation District Law).

- Conservation districts are political subdivisions or special service districts.
- As a political subdivision, a conservation district has some basic statutory duties, organizational guidelines and financial reporting ties to the state.

Key Activities of Districts



Courtesy USDA-NRCS

- On an ongoing basis, conservation districts assess the resource needs of the district (resource assessment)
- They develop long-range and annual plans with the goals and objectives designed to meet prioritized needs
- They provide linkages between land users and conservation service providers

Three components of planning

- **Resource assessment**

UACD, UDAF and NRCS worked together in 2005 to produce the Utah Resource Assessment. This is an important first step in the planning process. You must have a good feel for where you are and what the problems are before you can determine what to do.

- **Strategic (long-range) plan**

As District leaders, it is your job to paint the vision, mission and direction of the District. This should be captured in a written long range plan.

- **Annual plan of work**

An annual plan of work is critical to the success of a District. This plan should be looked at often and should be the guide to daily activity.

Public involvement is critical

- Districts should involve a broad spectrum of community representatives as they begin the planning process by assessing the state of the natural resources.



Resource assessment

- Outlines information about the natural resource needs and concerns in the district and summarizes the board's priority issues.

Introduction

Located in the Rocky Mountain Region, Utah derives its name from the Native American Ute tribe and means "people of the mountains". Utah is 84,900 square miles in area and is ranked the 11th largest state (in terms of square miles) in the United States. In the period of the Winter Olympic Games, the state boasts the most snow-covered ground. It is home of 18 colorful national parks. Its mountains, on average, are the tallest in the country, creating a state of great contrasts that ranges from the snow-covered peaks of the Uinta Range in the east to the southern deserts and their with renown natural rock formations and colored canyons. The geography is characterized by the high plateaus, basins, and valleys of the Basin and Range, and the mountain ranges.

The Rocky Mountain area is highlighted by the only east-west range the Uinta's which include the state's highest elevation of 13,528 above sea level and the Wasatch Range from Sanpete County north to Idaho.

The Colorado Plateau covers most of the southern and eastern areas of Utah and is marked by broad high country out by deep canyons and valleys. The western part of the region includes plateaus such as Aquarius, Markagunt, Cedar Breaks, and Fish Lake rising to 11,000 feet. Canyons include the national treasures of Bryce, Zion, and Canyonlands. The Colorado River drains much of this area. Utah's southeast corner is adjacent to Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado forming the "Four Corners" area, the only place in the US where four states meet.



Equal Opportunity, Producers, and Employees.



Begin strategic plan

- Once the resource assessment is done, work can begin on the strategic plan using the issues prioritized as most important.



Strategic plan

- Provides clear goals and objectives to be attained within a five-year time frame.
- Specific issues in the strategic plan come from the resource assessment.

Strategic plans

- Are focused, detailed and clear about what is to be done, who is involved, when each step is to be performed and how the plan will be evaluated.

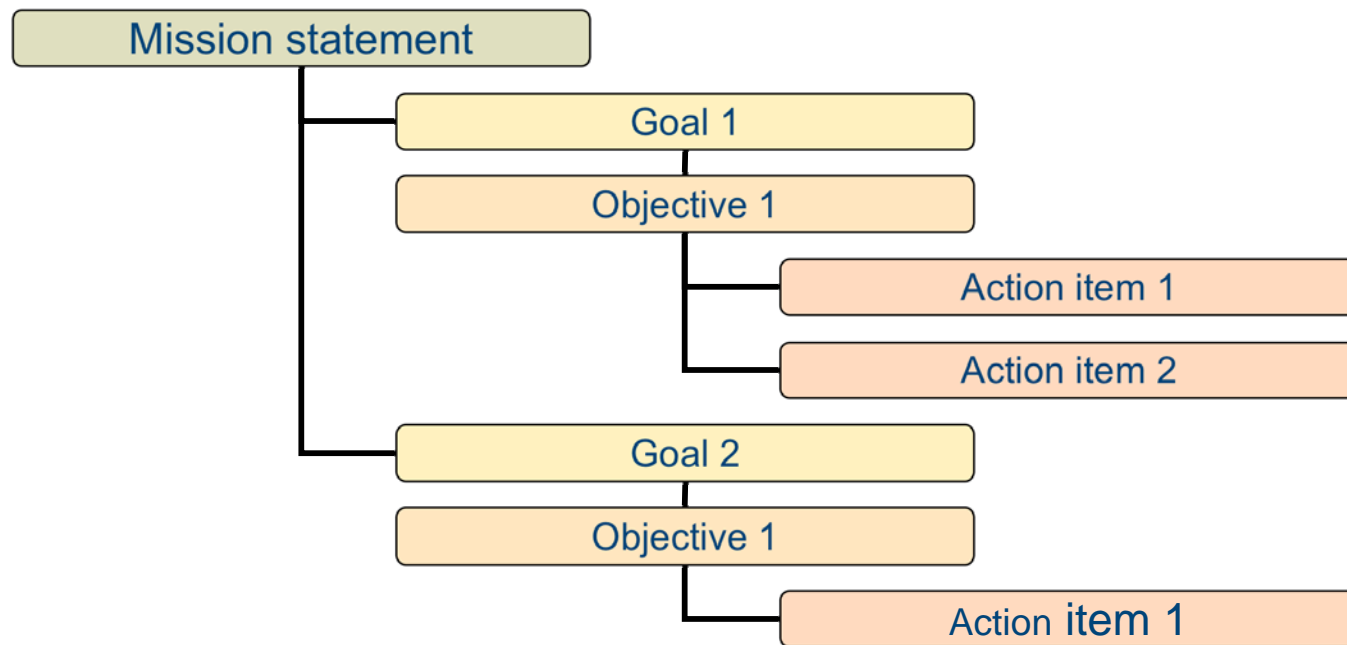


Elements of a strategic plan

- Mission statement (or purpose)
- Goals
- Objectives
- Strategies (or action items)

Sample outline

- A strategic plan's mission statement, goals, objectives and strategies might look like this:



Points to remember

- There is only one mission statement
- There may be one or more goals, one or more objectives to meet each goal, one or more action items to satisfy each objective.

More points to remember

- Strategic plans usually cover a period no longer than five years.
- District strategic plans should contain the list of prioritized issues from the resource assessment.



Annual plan of work

- The district's strategic plan can be broken down into annual segments, which are readily identifiable and guide the district in its day-to-day operations.



Annual plan of work (continued)

The plan of work includes:

- A list of key issues and goals;
- Activities to be completed under each goal;
- Timelines and responsible people who will complete the work (be specific);
- A review or evaluation process

Annual plan of work (continued)

- Example:
 - Goal: The Wasatch Soil Conservation District will work to successfully implement the Wasatch County Water Efficiency Project.
 - Action item 1: Provide overall direction and technical support to irrigation companies in planning for irrigation conservation.
 - Action item 2: Actively support the PL-566 Tri-Valley Watershed project
 - Action item 3: Strengthen the administrative and technical capabilities of the Wasatch SCD.
 - Action item 4: Implement an effective irrigation water management plan with each of the irrigation companies in the district.

Annual plan of work (continued)

- You may have more than one goal and more than one action/activity per issue identified.



Why plan?

- Planning makes the best use of your time and the district's staff and money.
- Planning means better decision-making.
- If we don't plan our future, who will?

Summary

- Planning provides the foundation for overall conservation district programs.
- Planning broadly defines the vision of the future and then focuses on the steps that are needed to address specific goals and objectives.

Summary

- Planning can be done on three levels: resource assessment, strategic plan and annual plan of work.
- Stakeholders, such as community leaders, ag producers and citizens, should be invited to participate in the planning process.

Summary

- The resource assessment documents information about the natural resource needs and issues in your community and is part of the strategic plan.

Summary

- Strategic plans focus on what is to be done, who is involved, how each step is to be performed, and how the plan will be evaluated.
 - Where are we now?
 - Where do we want to be?
 - How will we get there?
 - Who must do what?
 - How are we doing?

Summary

- The annual plan guides the district in its day-to-day programs, specifying activities, timelines, evaluation expectations and describes the responsible person.
- The annual plan comes directly from the strategic plan.

Resources Available

Resource Available	Where to Find It
UACD Continuing Education Module: Leading Out	On UACD website: www.uacd.org or your zone coordinator
Marketing for Success	www.ssi.nrcs.usda.gov/publications/index.html#marketing
Governor's Office of Planning and Budget	Brian Cottam 435-425-3670 www.planning.utah.gov
UACD Zone Coordinators	Talk to your coordinator, located in the field office nearest you
Utah Department of Agriculture & Food	Jake Jacobson 801-538-7171