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

- 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.
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.
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?
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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Available</th>
<th>Where to Find It</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UACD Continuing Education Module: Leading Out</td>
<td>On UACD website: <a href="http://www.uacd.org">www.uacd.org</a> or your zone coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget</td>
<td>Brian Cottam 435-425-3670 <a href="http://www.planning.utah.gov">www.planning.utah.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UACD Zone Coordinators</td>
<td>Talk to your coordinator, located in the field office nearest you</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utah Department of Agriculture &amp; Food</td>
<td>Jake Jacobson 801-538-7171</td>
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