

EXPLORING STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR:  
SACRAMENTO'S UBUNTU GREEN

Greta Ruth Ossman  
B.S., California State University, Sacramento 1994

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A Thesis

by

Greta Ruth Ossman

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Chair  
Mary K. Kirlin, D.P.A.

\_\_\_\_\_, Second Reader  
Edward L. Lascher, Jr., Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Name of Student: Greta Ruth Ossman

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this thesis is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the thesis.

\_\_\_\_\_, Graduate Coordinator  
Robert W. Wassmer, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Department of Public Policy and Administration

Abstract

of

EXPLORING STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR:  
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by

Greta Ruth Ossman

In this project I examine the processes and requirements to develop a strategic plan for a start-up, grassroots nonprofit. Ubuntu Green is a new nonprofit focused on bringing green lifestyle education, job training and policy improvements to underserved neighborhoods in Sacramento, California. I reviewed both academic and practitioner literature to justify the selection of best practices and a right-sized methodology for nonprofit strategic planning. My aim was in part to avoid, where possible, the potential for unintended consequences as a result of planning.

Delivering a strategic plan to Ubuntu Green revealed where new organizations will be challenged by this process. Several areas such as the experience of the facilitator, identification of organizational culture during the planning process, as well as adequate planning and resources to accomplish data collector were challenges for this new nonprofit organization. I make recommendations for remediating these issues early in the process with selective interviews, developing teams or subcommittees, and carrying the process through an annual planning cycle.

\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Chair  
Mary K. Kirlin, D.P.A.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis project creates a strategic plan for a specific, grassroots start-up organization in Sacramento, California – Ubuntu Green (UG). UG started, as most grassroots organizations do, as an all-volunteer organization that identified a community problem and worked at the local level to bring about lasting change. For these organizations, identifying available resources is challenging in the best of times, and even more so in tough economic times where existing organizations are competing for the limited resources that exist. For example, depending on the community and the goal of the organization, it is likely that the organization will encounter competition for qualified leadership, available volunteers, grant funding and other support services that are needed to bring about their planned outcome.

Businesses long ago realized the benefits of strategic planning when resources are limited and competition is high. The fundamentals of the strategic planning process include six to ten steps, depending on the needs of the organization, and can include: Assessing the organizations strengths and weakness, assessing the opportunities and risks of the external environment, developing goals based on how they can best leverage their strengths and resources to seize the available opportunities to fulfill their mission. A start-up nonprofit in an economic downturn is an ideal candidate to explore the benefits that can be gained from such planning.

## UBUNTU GREEN

Charles Mason, Jr., alumnus of California State University, founded Ubuntu Green (UG) in 2009. Mr. Mason is a professional advocate and lobbyist living in the Oak Park neighborhood of Sacramento, California, where the UG organization is based. UG seeks to meet the organization's vision of researching policy on green jobs; advocating for green urban planning, building and economic development; and bringing green life style principles to the community in the Oak Park neighborhood. The group sees a need for all programs to be supported with advocacy on the issues at the local, state and federal levels. Mr. Mason, as the Executive Director for the organization, has worked for several months developing the advisory council membership, the resulting board membership, the nonprofit 501(c)(3) status, as well as preliminary vision and mission statements for the organization.

This project began based on discussions in the first Advisory Council call in the summer of 2009 (Mason, 2009a), where the council identified the need to assess their capacity (i.e., strengths and weaknesses), and develop program focus, in order to identify funding sources to bring their proposed programs to life in the Oak Park Community. This project was introduced to the council who agreed to an objective, facilitated strategic planning process to develop a plan with achievable objectives for where they wanted to go in the current economy.

The original programs proposed by UG include a green neighborhood program and job training programs, as well as active advocacy and policy agendas. The advocacy

component was already launched, with clearly defined policy areas and targets. The primary program – Green Community – is considering its first projects to include a community garden, a sustainable arts program, and a jobs program intended to create training and employment opportunities for underserved local populations. The first programs initiated by UG will be focused in the Oak Park community of Sacramento, California.

UG’s advisory council has drafted working vision and mission statements:

*Mission - To promote innovations through the development of sustainable and equitable communities supported by green principles, development, jobs, and culture.*

*Value Statement - To see low-income and working class communities change with a focus on allegiances and relations with each other and the broader society that creates sustainability and diversity.*

Mason, 2009b.

The spirit and intent of this initial mission statement aligns with the visions and goals of the City of Sacramento’s Sustainability Master Plan (SMP), as well as the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) redevelopment goals for the Oak Park neighborhood (Table 1. *Goals Comparison...*). The underlined information indicates where the overlaps exist between these “plans” and includes: Public health and nutrition, increasing community involvement, improving the economic development of the area, improving energy independence, adding enriching community facilities, and bringing work to underrepresented groups. This alignment with government and

community goals will lay important groundwork for organization’s legitimacy in the community.

Table 1. *Goals Comparison – City of Sacramento Master Sustainability Plan, SHRA Development Goals, and Ubuntu Green Program Goals.*

<p>City of Sacramento, Master Sustainability Plan – Focus Areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <u>Energy Independence</u></li> <li>2) Climate Protection</li> <li>3) Air Quality</li> <li>4) Material Resources</li> <li>5) <u>Public Health and Nutrition</u></li> <li>6) Urban Design, <u>Land Use</u>, Green Building and Transportation</li> <li>7) <u>Parks, Open Space</u> and Habitat Conservation</li> <li>8) Water Resources and Flood Protection</li> <li>9) <u>Public Involvement</u> and Personal Responsibility.</li> </ol>	<p>SHRA Redevelopment Goals: Oak Park:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Eliminate the Ugliness</u></li> <li>- Attract New investment</li> <li>- Housing for all families</li> <li>- Enrich with <u>Community Facilities</u></li> <li>- Champion <u>Participation</u> in the Process</li> <li>- Encourage <u>Hiring of Underrepresented Workers.</u></li> </ul>	<p>Ubuntu Green Program Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Energy independence</u> through green technologies</li> <li>- <u>Better nutrition and health with improved food access</u></li> <li>- Neighborhood <u>beautification through arts</u></li> <li>- <u>Increased community participation</u> through <u>gardens</u></li> <li>- Increase training and employment of community members through green jobs training.</li> </ul>
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*City of Sacramento – 2007 Sustainability Master Plan. Page 2.*

*SHRA – Sacramento Revitalization – Oak Park 2005 – 2009. Page 3.*

*Mason, 2009b.*

STRATEGIC PLANNING – THE PROJECT

Strategic Planning is defined as a “management tool that helps an organization focus its energy, to ensure that members of the organization are working toward the same goals, to assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment. In short, strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future” (Adapted from Bryson's Strategic Planning in Public and Nonprofit Organizations as cited in NAMAC.com, 2009).

This project began with a review of available, applicable literature, and an assessment of strategic planning best practices. This was followed by an assessment of the organization and the environment in which it will be operating, as well as program goals so the organization can proceed with its mission through administration and program successes.

Planning challenges for this project included working with a geographically disbursed group of Advisory Council members (throughout California and all the way to the East Coast); as well as a philosophically diverse group that is focused on the opportunities of the green economy, in an economic recession. Distilling a clear organizational focus and identifying the resources available for the new organization to leverage into program successes will be a critical outcome of the strategic plan; thus enabling UG to implement fund raising as well as collaborate with other established agencies to achieve program successes.

The organization of the remainder of my thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 will review current literature on the history of strategic planning in for-profits, strategic planning in nonprofits and best practices for creating a strategic plan for a nonprofit. This information will identify the variations in practices and processes that are used for the development of the strategic plan. Additional background information will also be presented on Ubuntu Green's organizational documents and information on the neighborhood the programs are planned for. Based on the conclusions drawn from the literature on strategic planning best practices, Chapter 3 will review the method, or as

in this case, the process selected to complete the strategic planning process and plan writing for UG. Next, Chapter 4 will discuss the process and how the best practices were implemented. Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss the lessons learned from the process and recommendations for other strategic planning practitioners and nonprofits.



## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW, ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

A general search on literature for strategic planning reveals a great deal on for-profit research and studies, with a relatively smaller body of research on nonprofit strategic planning. In this chapter I focus on the key themes that are relevant to strategic planning for a start-up, nonprofit organization: History of Strategic Planning in Business, Strategic Planning in Nonprofits, and Best Practices for Nonprofit Strategic Planning. Also included in this chapter is an overview of the draft documentation created by Ubuntu Green, and information on the community UG will be operating in – Oak Park.

### HISTORY OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IN BUSINESS

Strategic planning as an art and a science is centuries old, beginning with military strategies in the age of Rome and evolving into a business tool. Strategic planning as a business tool has evolved over the past four decades from a business centric process, in which for-profit companies would undertake top-down initiatives to increase corporate profits through better resource management, cost cutting, and/or increased demand.

According to Ghemawat's (2002) comprehensive review of strategic planning, "Competition and Business Strategy in Historical Perspective," strategy was traditionally used in military planning, and it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century – at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution – that strategy became important in business (p. 23-25). Strategy was generally seen as unnecessary for the smaller, local businesses; yet as companies

grew and competition grew with them, companies needed a plan to maximize their investments in manufacturing, management and marketing (Ghemawat, 2002, p. 38).

The extreme limitation of resources during World War II accelerated the need for business strategy, and resulted in innovations in “management science” especially in the areas of formal strategic thinking. After the war these new insights, and the need for accelerated planning, fell by the way side as reconstruction efforts across Europe created an environment of tremendous demand; with little if any competition from European companies, American companies rushed to expand their capacity (Ghemawat, 2002, p. 39).

The era of high demand, and low competition changed in the 1950’s and 1960’s. Business schools, such as Harvard, began to focus student studies on business planning asking them to analyze industries in the context of growth/decline and competition. In the late 1950’s, Harvard Professor Kenneth Andrews argued “that every business, organization ... and even every individual [ought to] have a clearly defined set of purposes or goals which keeps it moving in a deliberately chose direction and prevents its drifting in undesired directions” (Ghemawat, 2002, p. 41). In the late 1960’s, Andrews was presenting the practice of matching a company’s internal strengths and weaknesses with external risks – opportunities and threats. The practice is known by its acronym, SWOT analysis. According to a Stanford Research Institute study, a majority of American companies had strategic planning departments by 1963 (Ghemawat, 2002, p. 44).

Strategic planning continued its growth from the late 1960's through the 1980's with the momentum in the 1980's primarily attributed to the desktop computer and other improvements in office technology. According to Mulhare's work, "Mindful of the Future: Strategic Planning Ideology and the Culture of Nonprofits", the educated layperson in a smaller organization could now use the tool and analysis to create strategic plans (p. 324). The accessibility of better tools, and increased competition in all sectors would bring strategic planning to more agencies, including the newest management discipline – nonprofit organizations.

#### STRATEGIC PLANNING IN NONPROFITS

In the late 1980's and 1990's the business world recognized nonprofit management as a new discipline in the business profession. This new discipline was just beginning to have a shared identity and these professionals weren't sure how their expertise differed from business management (Mulhare, 1999, p. 325). Beginning in the mid-1980's nonprofit executives and boards were encouraged to adopt these business practices to anticipate and cope with change, as well as improving accountability and performance (Siciliano, 1997, p. 387). As a result strategic planning was brought into the nonprofit world through workshops and consultants carrying the message that this methodology (i.e., strategic planning) was a proven professional technique that could be adapted to these organizations (Mulhare, 1999, p. 326). Despite some reluctance to trust and adopt business practices to their unique organizations, many nonprofits did apply this

new business management tool as evidenced by the evolution of best practices for nonprofit strategic planning in the next section.

Nonprofit adoption of strategic planning practices would not necessarily be uniform, or illicit consistent results, in the early years. In Beck, C. Lengnick-Hall and M. Lengnick-Hall's, "Solutions Out of Context – Examining the Transfer of Business Concepts to Nonprofit Organizations" (2008), the authors note that, "small nonprofits would benefit from adopting a business perspective and from using many of the business and management solutions developed in the private sector" (p. 153). They also acknowledge there are some distinct, contextual differences (i.e., mission, values and culture) that can result in an incomplete application or unintended consequences. Finally, they conclude that each organization is unique and should select practices and theories that can leverage the strengths of the organization, and highlight the importance of training and leadership as key to more successful implementations of these tools. In other words, assessing the organization and its environment would be key in order to apply the right tools to solve the critical issues identified by the organizations.

Kearns and Scarpino's review outlined the foundation of strategic planning themes after a decade or so of experience applying business practices to the nonprofit sector (1996), "Strategic Planning Research Knowledge and Gaps". This article identifies four broad categories of nonprofit strategic planning experience: Benefits, analytical tools, case studies, and empirical research (Kearns and Scarpino, 1996, p. 429). Based on the growth of the body of literature since the 1990's, and the scope of this project, I have

focused on literature related to the analytical tools and best practices for the development of the nonprofit strategic plan for discussion in the next section.

Additional literature was found regarding the adoption of other business practices such as capacity and board building for organizations exists. I consider these and other business practice adaptations beyond the scope of this review as they are not necessarily related to the creation of a nonprofit organization's strategic plan.

#### BEST PRACTICES FOR NONPROFIT STRATEGIC PLANNING

The fundamental process for strategic planning in nonprofits is based on practices that originated in the for-profit sector, and were then adapted to the nonprofit sector. A general outline of these steps includes: Identifying organizational readiness; reviewing the organizational vision and mission; assessing the organizations strengths and weaknesses; assessing their environment for opportunities and threats; generating program goals and priorities; and putting the plan into a document for review and dissemination. This section addresses current best practices from academic and practitioner literature and outlines what practices and processes will be the best to use in creating UG's first strategic plan.

As strategic planning has been adapted to the nonprofit sector, certain techniques work best in the development and implementation of strategic plans. Kearns' and Scarpino's early review of frameworks is a guide to nonprofit decision makers through the process of strategic planning. Their review of empirical research reveals what

prompted organizations to pursue strategic planning, the variations in the planning processes used, and the factors affecting the planning outcomes are an important place to start. In their review Kearns and Scarpino include a specific 1988 study by Webster and Wyle that asked three questions:

*“What prompted these organizations to use strategic planning?  
What variations in planning process did they display?  
What factors affect the strategic planning outcome?”  
(as cited in Kearns and Scarpino, 1996, p. 431).*

Of these, the most important question, and answer for this project are the variations of the processes used. According to the study results, these organizations generally followed variations of a multi-step process: Mission analysis, internal assessment, external assessment, strategy development, forecasting, and writing of the planning document. These basic steps are also followed in six other examples of best practices, with some variation, in academic and practitioner literature included in this section.

The minor variations on the multi-step process noted above are generally in the number of steps or phases outlined to complete the work (i.e., variations in steps range from 6 to 10 steps), and the order of the steps changes by model. For example, in some cases a vision statement is created first, in a more top down fashion; in other cases, the process starts with a look at the critical issues the organization is facing, and then addresses the mission, vision and values in a later stage. Table 2. *Strategic Planning Step Comparison*, below, outlines the fundamental steps from six researched strategic planning processes. I will discuss the variations in these steps below.

Table 2. *Strategic Planning Step Comparison*

Strategic Planning Process Steps	Modified or Variations on Steps (Source)
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission analysis (Kearns and Scarpino, 1996, p.431)</li> <li>• Critical issue identification (Martinelli, 2009)</li> <li>• Phase 1 – Get Ready (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 21)</li> <li>• Review mission statement (Whatcom Council of Nonprofits, 2009, section IV. para A.)</li> <li>• Reference Overall Singular Purpose (“Mission”) (McNamara, 2009)</li> <li>• What’s the Issue? (Peasley, 2009).</li> </ul>
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External analysis (Kearns and Scarpino, 1996, p.431)</li> <li>• Create/revisit mission statement (Martinelli, 2009)</li> <li>• Phase 2 - Define your Mission, Vision, Values (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 21)</li> <li>• Identify organizational readiness (Whatcom Council of Nonprofits, 2009, section IV. para B.)</li> <li>• Take Stock Outside and Inside System (McNamara, 2009)</li> <li>• Assumptions – Best and worst case assumptions of implementation (Peasley, 2009).</li> </ul>
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal assessment (Kearns and Scarpino, 1996, p.431)</li> <li>• Develop strategic vision statement (Martinelli, 2009)</li> <li>• Phase 3 -Assess Your Organization’s Situation (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 21)</li> <li>• Identify organizational resources (Whatcom Council of Nonprofits, 2009, section IV. para C.)</li> <li>• Analyze the Situation (McNamara, 2009)</li> <li>• Organizational Values (Peasley, 2009).</li> </ul>
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forecasting (Kearns and Scarpino, 1996, p.431)</li> <li>• Develop strategies (Martinelli, 2009)</li> <li>• Phase 4 – Agree on Priorities (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 21)</li> <li>• Conduct SWOT analysis (Whatcom Council of Nonprofits, 2009, section IV. para D.)</li> <li>• Establish Goals (McNamara, 2009)</li> <li>• Customer Benefits – What is the customer benefit if the issue is solved? (Peasley, 2009).</li> </ul>
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy development (Kearns and Scarpino, 1996, p.431)</li> <li>• Develop objectives (Martinelli, 2009)</li> <li>• Phase 5 – Write the Plan (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 21)</li> <li>• Identify stakeholders, assign roles (Whatcom Council of Nonprofits, 2009, section IV. para E.)</li> <li>• Establish Strategies (McNamara, 2009)</li> <li>• Additional Potential Benefits – Who else might benefit from the solution? (Peasley, 2009).</li> </ul>

Strategic Planning Process Steps	Modifications or variations (Source) (Continued)
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of the planning document (Kearns and Scarpino, 1996, p.431)</li> <li>• Develop actions (Martinelli, 2009)</li> <li>• Phase 6 – Implement the Plan (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 21)</li> <li>• Develop action plans (Whatcom Council of Nonprofits, 2009, section IV. para F.)</li> <li>• Establish Objectives Along the Way to Achieving Goals (McNamara, 2009)</li> <li>• Brainstorm Obstacles (Peasley, 2009).</li> </ul>
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop board plan and reporting (Martinelli, 2009)</li> <li>• Phase 7 – Evaluate and Monitor the Plan (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 21)</li> <li>• Collect and analyze program outcome data (Whatcom Council of Nonprofits, 2009, section IV. para G.)</li> <li>• Associate Responsibilities and Time Line with Each Objective (McNamara, 2009)</li> <li>• Strengths and Weaknesses (Peasley, 2009).</li> </ul>
8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected short- and long-term outcomes (Whatcom Council of Nonprofits, 2009, section IV. para H)</li> <li>• Write and Communicate Plan (McNamara, 2009)</li> <li>• Strategies – Performance gaps that need to be closed (Peasley, 2009).</li> </ul>
9.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual plan update (Whatcom Council of Nonprofits, 2009, section IV. para I.)</li> <li>• Acknowledge Completion and Celebrate Success (McNamara, 2009)</li> <li>• Actions – Activities to close performance gaps (Peasley, 2009).</li> </ul>
10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measurement and Success (Peasley, 2009).</li> </ul>

*Note: Best practices are grouped by step to show variable length in the processes, and variables by step. The Kearns and Scarpino research shows the shortest number of steps – six; while the New Heights presentation by Peasley shows the most – ten).*

Variations in the steps outline above include several different starting points:

Identifying organizational readiness, mission statement review, or critical issue identification. Some of these items, depending on the model, can be seen in the second step. As I move down the steps, it appears that some of these have been consolidated by certain plans (i.e., Allison and Kaye), and result in a relatively shorter overall process, step wise. Naturally, depending on the organization, their resources and the information needed to be processed to create a plan, planning time frames will tend to vary.



I noted in these steps that there are considerations for work that happens “prior” to the actual strategic planning and after the plan has been written. As seen in Step 1. and 2., the entire process can begin with a question regarding the state of the organization and readiness to begin planning, versus revising a mission statement; and go through the documentation, implementation and monitoring of the plan (Step 10.).

The upfront questions about organizational readiness are a serious consideration for organizations in flux. For example, “if a funding crisis looms, or if the founder is about to depart, or if the environment is so turbulent that everyone is putting out fires, then it doesn’t make sense to engage in strategic planning at this time” (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 31-35). An alternative starting point might be addressing what problem needs to be solved, or what opportunity is present that can be exploited (Peasley, 2009; Martinelli, 2009). Presuming the organization is ready, and there is work to be done, the planning would commence.

Once there has been organizational commitment to the strategic planning process, resources will need to be identified, people to include in the process, and meeting schedules and locations (Whatcom Council of Nonprofit, 2009, IV.C. para 1). These steps, depending on the project, or the maturity of the organization, could be considered outside of the actual planning process. Maturity of the organization and the issue the plan is focused on solving (i.e., fiscal, administrative, governance) would be key determinants for what level the planning process would start; and what model would work best for the organization. If the organization does not have maturity, as in the case

of a start-up, their process could begin with readiness questions to make sure they are at a point to really start the planning for programs.

An additional starting point or next “step” depending on the model is the creation or review of the organization’s mission, vision and values statements. Allison and Kaye (2005) provide a comprehensive definition for a mission statement:

*“A mission statement communicates to the world what you and why you do it...[it] has both a statement of purpose – why the organization exists – and a description of what the organization does – and for whom – to fulfill that purpose” (p. 16).*

Additionally, the organization will need to create or review their vision – what success looks like for the organization when they fulfill their goals – and what their values are that support the mission and vision.

A natural next “step” to a mission review, as seen in the practitioner literature, is the organizational and environmental assessment, also known as the SWOT analysis – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Some best practices insert a resource assessment in this step such that the cost (i.e., financial and human) of the process can be assessed and allocated (Whatcom Council of Nonprofits, 2009, p. 14); another model puts issue identification, assumptions and customer benefits prior to the SWOT analysis (Peasley, 2009) possibly in an effort to create a fresh look at the process. This feels juxtaposed and forced compared to the more traditional flow of planning; it may be useful in an organization that is more mature and needs some “out-of-the-box” thinking on planning.

The key to the internal assessment for the organization is to have up-to-date data on the organization so that the group can take a “clear-eyed look” at where they are. This assessment could refine and possibly reshape the issue or opportunity the organization is looking to address (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 135-139). This is a critical review of the organization in order to determine what can realistically be accomplished, with available resources, over the given planning time line. In Peasley’s presentation of the New Heights model, he suggests the analysis of strengths and weakness focus specifically about the issue being addressed, versus the organization as in other models. Further, this model suggests that the organization build on the strengths and minimize the weaknesses (Peasley, 2009).

The parallel idea to the organizational strengths and weaknesses are the opportunities and threats in the environment the organization will face, or already is facing. Several models suggest involving in stakeholder groups with the SWOT analysis in order to get more of a 360 degree view of the organization, especially where there might be blind spots to staff and board members (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 17; Whatcom Council of Nonprofits, 2009, p. 14). One model did not include a SWOT analysis but started with “Critical Issues” instead (Martinelli, 2009, “Critical Issues” section). If the organization were starting the planning process to solve a specific problem, this might be a logical progression, however, to seize an opportunity or to start an organization this order doesn’t allow the process to build and would be difficult for a new group to work with.

Once the organization has completed this critical step of identifying its strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats in the environment, and the analysis of these areas, planners can pursue a set of goals that build on strengths to take advantage of opportunities, while building up weaknesses and warding off threats (McNamara, 2008, p. 3; Peasley, 2009; Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 149-151).

The next “step” could be summed up as “Agree on Priorities” and would likely include goals, strategies to reach the goals, and objective as steps within the strategies to reach the goals (McNamara, 2008, p. 3; Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 177-178; Martinelli, 2009, “Strategy worksheet” section, “Strategic outcomes and activities worksheet” section). In this step the planners will establish goals for current or new programs based on the SWOT analysis. The goals would be established based on the timeline of the plan (i.e., for a three year plan the goal would be three years out), with the strategies possibly in annual “campaigns” and the objectives in monthly or quarterly increments. These time frames would be dependant on the amount of work required and the resources available to accomplish the objective.

Alternative considerations for this “step” of planning may be the definition of roles and responsibilities to carry out the work (Foundation for Community Assoc. Research, 2001, p. 10), who is creating the strategies (i.e., board, staff, community stakeholders) and the method for collecting this portion of the plan’s information (i.e., meetings, surveys, facilitated collaboration) (Whatcom council of Nonprofits, 2009, p. 14; Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 18).

The final “step” to be considered for this project is the documentation of the plan. The planners have gone through the process from readiness, the vision and mission of the organization, through the SWOT assessment and analysis, to the priorities of goals, strategies, and objectives. This information would then be put into a single document that can be reviewed, approved, shared with the board, staff and stakeholders, and followed through the timeline for updates, evaluation and measurement purposes (McNamara, 2008, p. 3; Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 18; Whatcom Council of Nonprofits, 2009, p. 15; Martinelli, 2009, “Action Planning Worksheet and Reporting Form”).

Additional “steps” beyond this would be implementing the plan; tracking of program performance data for reporting and planning purposes; and annual planning retreats for plan evaluation and updates. As this project develops only a strategic plan, these steps are not covered here and are considered out of scope.

Another item to consider in the overall scheme of strategic planning would be the current economic conditions. Planning for two years out may be too far and a month by month plan is more realistic when a reduction strategy, exit or consolidation plan is being considered. According to the National Council on Nonprofits, organizations are finding ways to do more partnering with other organizations that do the same or similar work. Utilizing this kind of micro-strategy would allow both organizations, for example, to maximize donations and grant funding for specific programs.

Other strategies include focused fundraising strategies, fund reserves and down sizing strategies should the need arise (National Council on Nonprofits, 2009, p. 1).

Finally, in Table 3. *Characteristics of a Useful Strategic Plan*, below, outlines some general characteristics to judge a plan.

Table 3. *Characteristics of a Useful Strategic Plan*

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A set of priorities.</li> <li>2. Achievable, measurable, and time sensitive.</li> <li>3. Flexible and responsive to changing conditions.</li> <li>4. Short and simple.</li> <li>5. A unit, not a menu (achievable).</li> <li>6. The means to an end, not an end in itself.</li> <li>7. Based on three- to five-year period.</li> </ol> |
|--|

*Foundation for Community Association Research, 2001, p. 11.*

The strategic planning processes can be time and resource intensive, with no guarantee that the resulting plan will be feasible, or the outcome successful. This is not to say that the process should be ignored, especially by start-up organizations, since one of the primary functions of a strategic plan is to allocate scarce resources and strengthen organizational viability (Mara, 2000, p. 212).

#### GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

Much of the literature that exists on nonprofit strategic planning has been research applied to larger, established organizations such as hospitals, foundations, and associations (Williamson, 1997; Kloss, 1999; Stauber, 2001); specific applications such as fund development through direct mail (Vavra, 1994); board performance (Green and Griesinger, 1996; Greenlee and Trussel, 2000), and change management (Medley and Akan, 2008). These topics, while important to the further development of established organizations, do not address the features and benefits of the strategic planning process

for the startup, nonprofit organization. Given this minor gap, I will be conducting a project to develop a strategic plan for a startup, nonprofit: Ubuntu Green.

#### THE CLIENT ORGANIZATION – UBUNTU GREEN

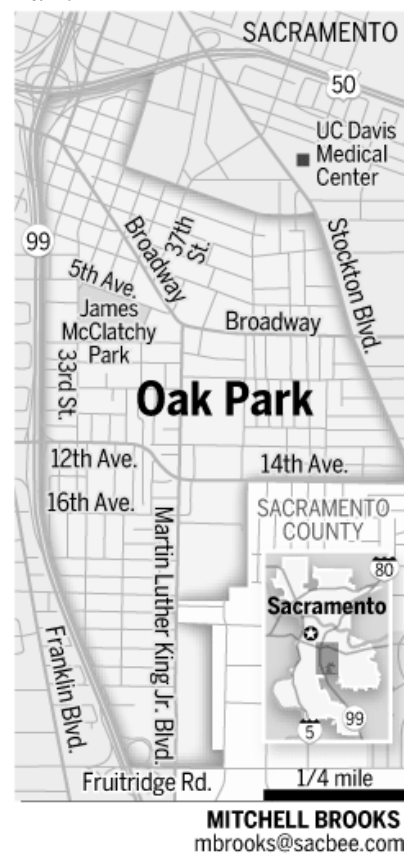
This project began with the founder's concern "with the impact of the green movement on urban centers, low income families and communities of color" (Ubuntugreen.org, 2009, "Where is My Green?" section). His concern is based on his experience in public policy that while the environmental movement is progressive, there are still areas and people that can get overlooked in the process. The founding principle of UG is to ensure these communities, like Oak Park, are not overlooked when it comes to funding for green job training; that LEED standards are used in these areas to not only improve the standard of living for residents, but also generate much needed savings on energy costs; and that green lifestyles are promoted in these communities including community gardens, farmers markets and access to healthy foods.

The UG website has informative content not only on the organization (i.e., "Where is My Green?") but also on the proposed programs, a link to an ongoing blog tracking advocacy and events, UG team information, and program events. Other pages under construction are the Green T's page, and the community resources page. All organizational information points to their work and focus on Sacramento's Oak Park Neighborhood.

## THE COMMUNITY – SACRAMENTO’S OAK PARK NEIGHBORHOOD

Oak Park has a unique place in Sacramento’s history as the first suburb of the City. This unique history has not always been promising, and is the reason for UG’s focus on this community. According to the City of Sacramento’s “Oak Park Historic Survey” (2001), Oak Park began in the late 1880’s with the division of the Doyle ranch into smaller lots that would be destined for working class families. The developer hoped that this area would become a small community with its own commercial center and add housing for the workers of the City of Sacramento (City of Sacramento, 2001, p. A-2). As the trolley came to Sacramento, and Oak Park, it improved transportation of workers from the new suburb to the city, as a result growth increased and the business district thrived. Oak Park became a desirable addition to the City and was annexed in 1911; the first change to the City’s boundaries since founded in 1848 (City of Sacramento, 2001, p. A-4, 6).

Figure 1. *Boundaries of Oak Park*



Unfortunately, the new suburb of the City would experience drastic changes between 1960 and 1980 including the opening of Highway 99 on the west side of Oak Park, dividing the communities that had been growing together, and the relocation of the



State Fair from Stockton Boulevard to Cal Expo. The resulting community division and loss of jobs contributed to a depressed housing market resulting in home vacancies and a high number of rentals, creating and expanding the blight and the crime of the area (City of Sacramento, 2001, p. A-14, 15).

Today the Oak Park neighborhood is on the rebound as one of the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) redevelopment areas, and other concentrated efforts from the City of Sacramento and local nonprofits. As of this report there are approximately one-hundred other registered nonprofits in the area including Oak Park Neighborhood Association, several schools and two hospitals (MelissaData.com, 2009, Zip code 95817 section). This many nonprofits in one zip code is both a testament to the need in the neighborhood, and the competition that exists for available funding, volunteers, and other local support.

The research completed on the history of strategic planning in the for-profit sector, the application of strategic planning to nonprofits, and the literature on best practices currently being applied in the nonprofit sector, reveals the many options available to nonprofits creating strategic plans. Ultimately, the process of strategic planning in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors differs mostly in considerations that are made when developing these plans; namely in terms of resources available and the level of experience the organization has with planning (i.e., maturity). The fundamentals of strategic planning, for any type of organization, involve leadership and (ideally) stakeholder participation in the evaluation of an organization in order to determine its

priorities, resources, risks and solutions to map a path that accomplishes agreed up on goals. (Siciliano, 1997, p. 388; Mulhare, 1999, p. 326; Beck, Legnick-Hall, et al 2008, p. 153; Moore, 2003, p. 184). In addition to applying the fundamentals of strategic planning, a primary focus for nonprofit strategic planning would ensure the strategy is feasible, creates value for the community and is sustainable (Moore, 2003, p. 184).

This research also showed how different nonprofits exercise the options available to develop a strategic plan, leading me to the conclusion that the process should be right-sized to the organization. In other words, one size does not fit all in strategic planning. Based on my research, and limited experience; the needs of the organization (i.e., an expedited plan); the resources available (i.e., no funding or resources other than volunteers); and their level of organizational maturity (i.e., UG is a new organization) I have elected to use the strategic planning guide presented in Allison and Kaye's (2005), "Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations – A Practical Workbook". The steps of this strategic planning process, and which will be included in this project and excluded, will be discussed in the next chapter, Methodology.

## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

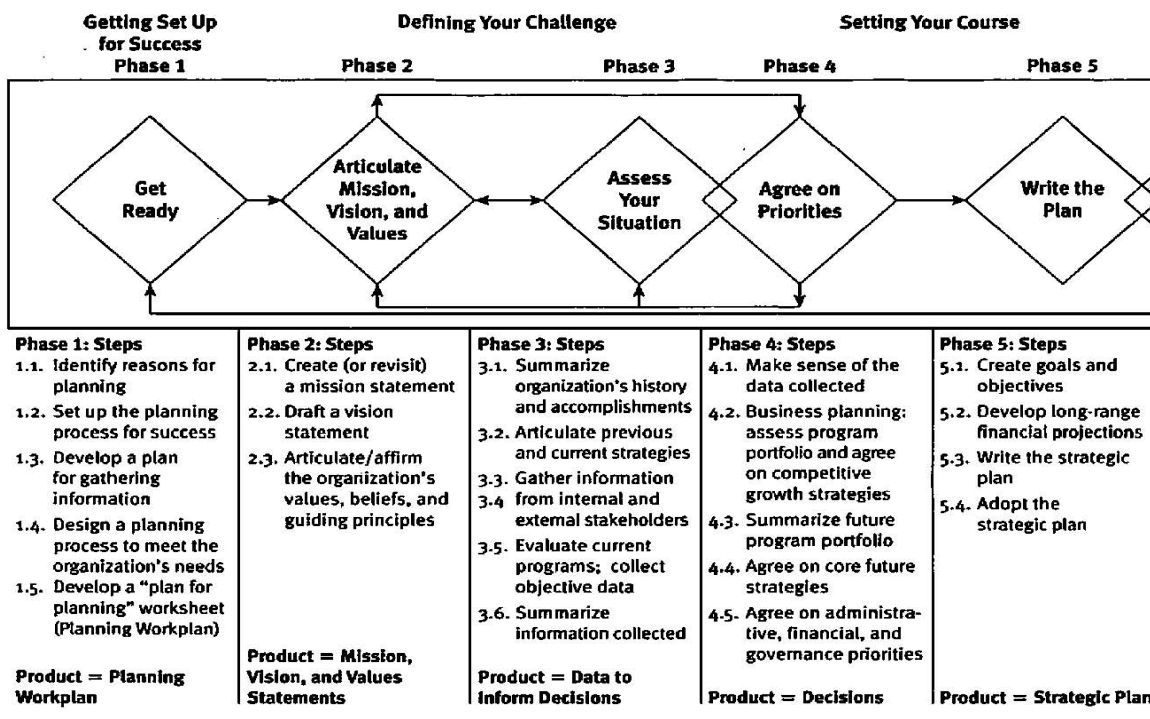
The ultimate goal of this project is the delivery of a strategic plan to the start-up nonprofit organization, UG. Based on the client organization's (UG) need for an expedited planning project, to be completed with only volunteers as resources, I determined that the most comprehensive and easy to administer process would be based on Allison and Kaye's (2005), "Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations – A Practical Guide and Workbook".

UG founder, board, and advisory council members have been working diligently as volunteers for several months to bring the organization together. They have recognized their limited resources, the diversity of their goals, and that funding opportunities in the current economy are sparse. In order to bring organizational focus to apply for funding and utilize their limited volunteer resources, UG asked for an expedited plan such that the next round of funding opportunities could be reviewed and prioritized based on what they had "planned".

Allison and Kaye (2005) lay out a clear and detailed methodology based on the benefits of planning, "A successful strategic planning process supports an organization involving its stakeholders in reaching consensus about what end results they are trying to achieve... and the means to accomplish those results" (p. 20). Their work presents a seven-step conceptual framework that incorporates historic information, definitions, tools and techniques for facilitating the entire planning process. This process is detailed,

sizable and takes into account the fundamental best practices of the majority of resources reviewed. The tools available with the guide include a CD-rom with 20 practitioner worksheets to focus each step and stream line the process making their work appropriate for an entry-level practitioner such as myself; as well as providing tools and techniques for more advanced facilitation. A summary of their process steps can be seen below in Figure 2 – *Allison and Kaye’s Strategic Planning Process* (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 15).

Figure 2 – *Allison and Kaye’s Strategic Planning Process*



Source: © CompassPoint Nonprofit Services

This guide allowed me to “right-size” the strategic planning process for the “client” organization (UG); including modifications such as using only steps one

through five, to complete the strategic plan. Implementing, evaluating and monitoring the plan are future steps that will need to be considered by UG.

In Chapter 4 – Developing a Strategic Plan for Ubuntu Green, I will discuss the execution of the planning steps, or phases, through strategic plan development. In Chapter 5 – Findings and Recommendations, I will discuss the nuances that occurred during this strategic planning process, what I learned and make recommendations for other practitioners.

## Chapter 4

### DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR UBUNTU GREEN

Based on the organization's identified need for an expedited strategic plan, I began the strategic planning process based on Allison and Kaye's (2005), "Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations – A Practical Guide and Workbook". This planning process created the necessary framework for the strategic plan process for UG. The resulting strategic plan will serve as the foundation in fund raising and business planning for UG's programs:

- Green Community Program
- Community Development Program – Job Training Program.

As mentioned in the prior chapters, Allison and Kaye present a seven-step process for completing a strategic plan. As also noted in prior chapters, the goal of this project is the delivery of a strategic plan to UG, therefore only five of the seven phases will be completed:

*Phase One: Get Ready*  
*Phase Two: Articulate Mission, Vision and Values*  
*Phase Three: Assess Your Situation*  
*Phase Four: Agree on Priorities*  
*Phase Five: Write the Plan.*

The last two phases presented by Allison and Kaye will not be completed as they are out of scope for this project:

*Phase Six: Implement the Plan*  
*Phase Seven: Evaluate and Monitor the Plan.*

Additionally, some of these phases suggest work that UG, as a start-up organization has not undertaken. For example UG has not fully identified and surveyed their external stakeholders to include this data in the SWOT analysis. Variations such as this will be outlined by phase in this chapter.

#### PHASE ONE - GET READY

In Phase One of the Allison and Kaye model they outline five steps to work through for setting up the project up, including:

- “1.1 *Identify the reasons for planning.*
- 1.2 *Set up the planning process for success.*
- 1.3 *Develop a plan for information gathering.*
- 1.4 *Design a planning process to meet the organizations needs.*
- 1.5 *Develop a ‘plan for planning’”*  
(Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 21).

Identify reasons for planning. UG is a new organization founded by passionate people with very diverse skills and focus; in an economic recession; for an underserved community that may have duplicate services being delivered by another organization. Given the broad view of the organization, the lack of funding and entry into a new nonprofit area (i.e., green principles and technology), UG decided it needed a strategic plan to bring focus to the mission of the organization. There are several questions about the mission they wanted to pursue, the resulting programs, and how everything would be sustained with funding that the organization needed to answer in the strategic planning process (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 32-34). I theorized that the process, and resulting

plan, would give the organization focus in order to pursue administrative and program resources to deliver their envisioned programs to the community.

*Set up the planning process for success.* The fundamental criteria for setting up planning for success would be to have the right people committed to the process, these people are willing to share information (i.e., be collaborative), there is commitment from leadership to complete the process and support the outcome, and essentially the knowledge that the organization is ready to plan (Allison and Kaye, 2005 p. 35-36). Since UG is such a new organization, there were limited people to involve in the process such as the ED, board members and advisory council members; and as such, had the organizational authority to make decisions. This group decided they were ready and were committed to going through the process and supporting the resulting plan.

*Develop a plan for gathering information.* Gathering data for this project would constitute a major portion of the work. Given that I was working on an expedited planning effort, I condensed this effort into three steps: Reviewing of organizational documents, observation of the organization through conference calls, followed by an online survey. This data collection process was completed over two months. Administering the survey to advisory council members was the last step in soliciting baseline information on mission, vision, stakeholders, SWOT, program goals, and timeline. The summarized results from the survey are discussed under Phase Three.

*Design a planning process to meet the organizations needs.* The considerations suggested for this portion of Phase One include review of prior strategic planning



processes and documents, how to involve stakeholders, time frame, division of labor, and the possibility of using a retreat (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 47-48). UG is a start-up, and so without prior planning documents this step was fairly brief. Additionally, external stakeholders have not been identified or surveyed as part of this process, and therefore are not included in the data or as participants.

As for the division of labor, the limited people involved in the process were the ED, board members and advisory council members, and I, making the division of labor relatively simple. As a result, the ED and I completed the majority of the work for this strategic plan including: Planning, coordination, and documentation.

The timeline for completing the planning process was based on the need of UG, and the deadline for this thesis project. Finally, a retreat would be unreasonable for this plan given the group is comprised entirely of volunteers, and as of this writing has no confirmed funding.

Develop a “plan for planning”. The plan designed to meet UG’s needs for this project was based on a compressed planning time frame. The plan for “the plan” included all the decisions from the prior steps as seen summarized below:

*Personnel involved:* ED, board members, advisory council members and select volunteer staff.  
*Format:* Data collection prior to four-hour meeting.  
*Time frame:* Planning to be completed over a four-month period.  
 Plan to cover two years.  
*Plan Products:* Mission, Vision, SWOT, operational and strategic plans.

The next phase will discuss the Mission, Vision and Values processes.

## PHASE TWO – DEFINE YOUR MISSION, VISION, VALUES

This phase of planning covers the creation or review of Mission, Vision and

Values statements:

- “2.1 *Write (or revisit) your mission statement.*
- 2.2 *Draft a vision statement.*
- 2.3 *Articulate/affirm your values, beliefs, and guiding principles”*  
*(Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 21).*

*Create (or revisit) a mission statement.* The groundwork for the organizational identity started with a review of the organization and a consideration of the problems they wanted to solve. Having a mission statement and deciding what function the information provides for the organization was the next critical step in the process. Reviewing the draft mission statement began with the organizational overview, and dovetailed into a discussion in the strategic planning meeting.

I shared that the mission statement is the focus of the problem the organization intends to solve through its products and/or services (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 118). For UG, their mission is essentially to improve the lives of their community members by introducing green lifestyle principles and methods to them. The new updated mission statement makes it much easier to understand what the group was trying to accomplish in their community (Table 4. *Comparison of Mission Statements*).

Table 4. *Comparison of Mission Statements*

<p>Draft Mission Statement:</p> <p><i>Promotion of sustainable and equitable green principles, development, jobs, culture and innovations in urban communities.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Bring communities in touch with governmental, organizational and business leaders.</i></li> <li>- <i>Include low income communities and communities of color.</i></li> <li>- <i>Collaborate with local, state and federal agencies on advocacy, research, and development projects.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Updated Mission Statement:</p> <p><i>Ubuntu Green, as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is committed to promoting the green movement in underserved communities through advocacy, employment, education, and economic development.</i></p>
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*Draft a vision statement.* UG wants to be a community leader in the new green economy where they are seen as a resource for information and services that provide a better quality of life for their community. Originally, they did not have a draft vision statement to review. Since an organizational vision is based on some future state, and the fact that one did not exist, I decided to address this in the pre-meeting survey with question two: “What do you perceive to be the vision of the Ubuntu Green organization? In other words, what is the optimum future state?” I shared in the strategic planning meeting the purpose is an organizational vision statement stating a realistic, but challenging vision of success – the state of the organization when they have achieved their goals (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p.120-121). In the meeting there was a good deal of discussion of what their message will be to funders and community members, and coupled with a review of the survey responses for this item, we were able to put together a more cohesive statement, seen in below:

*Vision: A leader in promoting green principles, through partnerships, to increase public health, cleaner and safer environments, improved food access, and greater economic opportunities to underserved communities.*

*Articulate/affirm the organization's values, beliefs, and guiding principles.*

The draft organizational documents also contained their value statement, a tag line, and “elevator speech.” All the important, relevant organizational information is contained in the below statements, including redundancies and some lack of clarity. Based on this I solicited additional information on organizational values with question four of the pre-meeting survey: “What are the top five to seven values that you see in the Ubuntu Green organization at start up (now), and/or the values that the organization will need to foster in order to carry out its mission?” These responses and resulting discussion in the planning meeting didn’t bring any changes to the value statement below.

*Value Statement: To see low-income and working class communities change with a focus on allegiances and relations with each other and the broader society that creates sustainability and diversity.*

Additional information related to the mission, vision and values can be found in the tag line and elevator speech below. Considering the priority of the meeting and what could reasonable be accomplished, the group will need to do some clean up on the elevator speech to create a final consistent message for funding and partnership purposes.

*Tag Line: “Where sustainable and equitable communities unite.”*

*Elevator “Speech”: “Ubuntu Green is a non-profit organization devoted to promoting innovations that create sustainable and equitable communities supported by green principles, development, jobs, and culture.*

*Ubuntu Green's organizational philosophy is based on the African term Ubuntu, which refers to humanity and allegiances between all people. We aim to promote the green movement in underserved communities through advocacy, programs, research, and economic development.*

*Our work will lead to increased public health, cleaner and safer environments, improved food access, and greater economic stability.”*

### PHASE THREE – ASSESS YOUR ORGANIZATION’S SITUATION

The model proposes these steps for the organizational assessment phase:

- “3.1 *Develop your organizational profile: Summarize organizational history and prepare summary information regarding programs and services.*
  - 3.2 *Articulate previous and current strategies.*
  - 3.3 *Gather data from internal stakeholders regarding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.*
  - 3.4 *Gather data from external stakeholders regarding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.*
  - 3.5 *Collect empirical data to better understand the choices to be made during the strategic planning process. Evaluate current programs.*
  - 3.6 *Summarize findings from data gathered from internal and external sources...”*
- (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 21-22).*

*Develop your organizational profile: Summarize the organizations history and accomplishments.* This step was considered only partially relevant to the scope of this project. As a startup, UG does not have any prior project or program accomplishments to note. UG’s primary accomplishments to date include a successful application for 501(c)(3) status, volunteer participation on research, participation at local events increasing awareness about the organization, and participation in certain legislative discussions.

Additionally, being a start-up their history has only just begun. As a result the “founding” history, or story that is part of their website is the only documentation that would apply to this step. This step will be more significant to future planning efforts.

Articulate previous and current strategies. Articulating UG’s previous and current strategies was also considered partially relevant to the scope of this project. As a startup, UG does not have any prior work to review or critique. Their current strategies are based on volunteer-based projects, programs, advocacy and legislative work; projected funding to implement selected projects; and administrative strategies such as fundraising and marketing plans. That said the ED has developed fundraising and marketing plans for the organization. These are not considered in detail in this project, but are noted as objectives in the final strategic plan.

Gather data from internal stakeholders. For this step, information was gathered based on the information gathering plan (Phase One, step 3) and focused primarily on internal stakeholders. The three areas information was collected was through organizational documents, advisory call participation, and an electronic survey. The internal stakeholders are the advisory council, board members identified prior to meeting, and any other volunteers recruited at that time.

I called into three advisory council conference calls arranged and facilitated by the ED (Mason, 2009a). Based on their introductions and contributions, I observed that a majority of advisory council members were on the call (20 of 24 members), and were experienced professionals with nonprofit and for-profit backgrounds (i.e., average

professional experience of ten plus years), with diverse backgrounds (i.e., web design, events, fundraising, policy, advocating).

I concluded based on the agenda, and resulting conversations, that the group members' focus was very broad considering they were a new group, without current funding, and focusing on one neighborhood in Sacramento. These initial discussions included project and program work on healthcare, energy costs, job training, art, home improvement, economic development, education, nutrition, food access, public health, transportation and community planning. This broad vision also showed up in the draft "Ubuntu Green Organizational Overview" (Mason, 2009b). The documents and conversations reflected the passions of a diverse group of people that were working toward positive community changes. It would be fair to say that presenting a focused plan to potential funders and partner organizations would benefit them in order to achieve the positive outcomes they sought for the community.

Based on these early observations and assessment of the organization, as well as their geographic dispersion, I determined that individual interview meetings would be too cumbersome to work into an expedited strategic planning process. As a result I pursued an online survey, with focused topical questions to capture more concrete responses, and start a strategic planning discussion. There were two primary goals of the electronic survey: 1) allow for honest, anonymous responses, and 2) attempt to respect their volunteer time while getting a quick look at the organization prior to a meeting.

The survey process and survey were reviewed and approved by the California State University, Sacramento Graduate Public Policy and Administration Human Subjects Committee. I determined that utilizing an Internet resource and sending consent forms and the survey link via e-mail, would be the quickest way to meet the approved human subject survey requirements and get the information out to the advisory council members. The online resource would also provide anonymity for the respondents (i.e., allow more candid, individual responses), a single access point for reviewing and organizing the qualitative answers the allowed me to share summary level responses at the strategic planning meeting.

Prior to sending out the survey to all advisory committee members, I presented a project update on the August 25, 2009 conference call and followed up with emails with the letter of consent for data collection and meeting participation. The ED identified the final list of survey participants including board members and other identified volunteer staff that would also participate in a single strategic planning meeting.

In the case of UG, the survey was sent out via email to 24 participants with a link to the online survey, with three additional reminders sent over a four-week period asking for their participation. By the time the survey was closed, eight respondents participated, with five completing the 10-question survey.

The survey responses were reviewed, analyzed, and summarized into themes for discussion at the strategic planning meeting. Questions in the survey sought the following baseline information on UG:



- Validation of the UG organizational vision, or optimum future state of the organization.
- Optimum planning horizon for the organization’s first strategic plan (ranging from two years to five years).
- Perceived organizational values UG has, and would need to fulfill their mission.
- Stakeholder groups that would be identified for program outreach.
- Realistic strengths and weaknesses of Ubuntu Green, and projected opportunities and threats of the environment that UG is planning to operate in.
- Ideal top three to five goal that the organization should focus on in the first strategic plan.

Please refer to “Appendix A – Ubuntu Green Strategic Planning Survey Questions and Summarized Responses”, for the original summarized response data.

*Gather data from external stakeholders.* The groups of external stakeholders were not defined at the beginning of the process. Given the complexity of this effort and the time frame allotted, this work was not completed during the process. UG, as a startup, is still in the process of focusing on the kinds of funds they can raise to implement their program portfolio. That said, they are in the process of defining the programs in the portfolio and the implementation of any of these is going to be dependent on funds available. Ultimately, this is a “chicken or egg” scenario for them and is further addressed in the recommendations section of Chapter 5.

Evaluate current programs; collect objective data. An evaluation of current programs was considered irrelevant to the scope of this project. As a startup, UG does not have a large set of current work and no prior work to review or critique. Their current programs are, as of this writing, unfunded, and based on volunteer-based projects, advocacy and legislative work. That said, collecting objective data on the organization would be difficult. Due to the time and resource constraints of the project, data was not collected on “competing” organizations or project. This will be critical information for UG to gather and include in future planning discussions.

Summarize information collected. The data collected from internal stakeholders through organizational documents, advisory calls, and most importantly the online survey, was reviewed and summarized prior to the strategic planning meeting. The summarized information included organizational themes, confirmation of the values statement, new considerations to update the mission statement, information to create a vision statement, and data to complete a draft SWOT analysis.

The survey responses showed the true diversity of the founding members of the organization. While they did confirm their focus on green living and advocacy, there was such a broad response to the program question that I was concerned there would be the need for an additional meeting outside of the originally planned strategic planning meeting in order to come to an agreement on a focused plan for UG. Survey responses revealed several themes including the following:

- Corroboration that fundraising will be difficult in the current economy; and with a new, unrecognized nonprofit.
- Confirmation of a very diverse set of organizational goals from a community garden to high-level public policy and advocacy.
- Substantiation of a very diverse group of stakeholders across a wide range of age groups in the community; along with underprivileged members of the community.
- Verification of organizational values such as integrity, service, respect and inclusiveness are in alignment with nonprofit service.
- Authentication that the over arching mission of the organization is to promote an accessible green lifestyle for the community members.

The summarized themes above, also apply to the information in the SWOT analysis. I guided the group through a discussion of what their priorities would and could be given what they are good at already (i.e., strengths) and where they could grow (i.e., opportunities); and where there were weaknesses that needed to be remedied in order to make the organization viable. For example, they have a great deal of expertise in advocacy, making that a strength, however, they don't have a great deal of expertise in fundraising, making that a weakness. A summary of UG's SWOT analysis can be seen in Table 5. – *Ubuntu Green Summarized SWOT Analysis*, below.

Table 5. *Ubuntu Green Summarized SWOT Analysis*

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated, diverse, experienced leadership.</li> <li>• Experience collaborating with other organizations for mutual benefit.</li> <li>• Access and relationships with local, state, and federal representatives.</li> <li>• Founded in the community we will serve.</li> <li>• Established relationships with faith-based, multi-ethnic/cultural, business and educational organizations.</li> <li>• Identified volunteer work force.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New organization.</li> <li>• Lack of hired staff.</li> <li>• Growing name recognition.</li> <li>• Lack of current funding or dedicated fundraiser.</li> <li>• Articulating the collaborative nature of UG to all communities.</li> <li>• Newly implemented funding plan.</li> <li>• Broad focus on multiple areas of new green economy.</li> <li>• Development of administrative capacity.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green economy is new and growing.</li> <li>• Starting up in recession.</li> <li>• Access to numerous green education programs coming to Sacramento community.</li> <li>• Creation of new jobs in recessed economy; underserved community.</li> <li>• Funding focus has changed to green economy: i.e., federal stimulus funding, California Endowment.</li> <li>• Broad focus on multiple areas of new green economy to take advantage of potential funding opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing relationships with existing organizations.</li> <li>• Community apathy and reluctance to embrace change.</li> <li>• Competition for funding from other nonprofit groups in the community.</li> <li>• Reduced funding available in current economy.</li> <li>• Structural weaknesses and gaps in human service sector.</li> <li>• Gap between public and private services available.</li> <li>• Duplication of past and existing community programs.</li> </ul>

#### PHASE FOUR – AGREE ON PRIORITIES

The next phase of the strategic planning process included a review of the SWOT analysis developed in the meeting and how program priorities were affected the analysis.

The steps included in this phase are:

- “4.1 *Make sense of the data collected.*
- 4.2 *Business planning: Assess program portfolio and agree on competitive growth strategies.*

- 4.3 *Summarize future program portfolio.*
- 4.4 *Agree on core future strategies.*
- 4.5 *Agree on administrative, financial and governance priorities”*  
(Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 22).

*Make sense of the data collected.* The data collected and summarized was presented in a single, four-hour strategic planning meeting. As the facilitator, I was responsible for the meeting set-up, agenda, and general order of the meeting. In order to put all the data in context, I created the agenda below to essentially walk the participants through the entire process, and build on each element. While the UG process did not follow the Allison and Kaye phases in a linear fashion, I feel we have addressed all the important and relevant portions of their process.

*Agenda Item – Discussion Time*

- *Introduction and Agenda Review – 15 minutes*
- *Planning Review – 10 minutes*
- *Survey Results – Q & A – 20 minutes*
- *Vision, Values, and Mission – 45 minutes*
- *Break (working lunch) – 15 minutes*
- *UG Strengths and Weaknesses – 45 minutes*
- *Environmental Opportunities and Threats – 30 minutes*
- *Break – 10 minutes*
- *Program goals based on Strengths and Opportunities – 50 minutes*
- *Next Steps: Draft Document and document acceptance/approval*

We began the agenda with introductions and setting ground rules. I also took the opportunity to go over roles to ensure that I would have some level of control over the agenda and discussion. I found it made more sense to the flow of the meeting to remind the participants they were here to participate and that I, as the facilitator, would ask questions and make suggestions to the process.

For the Planning Review agenda item, I provided a quick overview of the strategic planning process, and outlined how I came to the conclusion that doing an expedited plan for UG, built on the framework and tools by Allison and Kaye (2005), “Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations – A Practical Guide and Workbook,” made the most sense for their project.

As a note, I have covered the next agenda items: “Survey Results” in Phase 3, section 3.4; “Vision, Values, and Mission” in their respective sections (Phase 2, section 1 mission statement, section 2.2 vision statement, and section 2.3 values); as well as “UG Strengths and Weaknesses” and “Environmental Opportunities and Threats” in Phase 3, section 3.6 above.

Ultimately, at the end of this meeting, all collected data was summarized (vision, mission, values, proposed program information, and SWOT analysis), for discussion by the ED and present board members.

*Business planning: Assess program portfolio and agree on competitive growth strategies.* An assessment of the program portfolio was completed as compared to the strengths and opportunities the organization found relevant. Based on this evaluation, the Green Community Program and advocacy efforts were selected as the initial focus for the organization.

The Green Community Program includes the development of a Community Garden Project to educate residents about the nutritional, community and economic benefits of a local garden. This program would also include the Green Arts Projects

to promote art as a way to greening the community. The program will support artists using recycled and reusable materials and promote joint collaborations with UG and urban artists.

The UG Advocacy program works with local, state and federal representative in areas of green policy and technologies. UG's advocacy efforts include support of green training, planning and development, jobs, and education. These current strategies will be the starting point for future programs in the next strategic plan.

Summarize future program portfolio. As mentioned in the section above, the current programs are the starting point for future programs in the next strategic plan, two years in the future (2012). UG has goals for future programs including job training in green industries, and expanding their Green Community Program's to other underserved communities. These future programs are out of this projects scope.

Agree on core future strategies. Based on the SWOT assessment the core future strategies that UG acknowledges are priorities are primarily in the fund raising area. The ED has a detailed funding raising plan that is not covered in this project. Other core future strategies are out of this projects scope.

Agree on administrative, financial and governance priorities. There is a great deal of work for UG to accomplish in the areas of administration, finance and governance. During the meeting there a realization that administration needed a great deal more attention, and resources than they had acknowledged; they also acknowledged what they could accomplish, and what the priorities of these programs should be. For

example, given their 501(c)(3) status there are specific limits on the percentage of time and resources staff can dedicate to advocacy and legislation on behalf of the organization. In the end this becomes simple math: Take all your resources, subtract what it will take to run the organization, subtract the maximum amount of time you can do advocacy work, and what is left is the time you can develop and implement programs.

#### PHASE FIVE – WRITE THE PLAN

The final phase of the strategic planning process included in this project is the finalization of the strategic plan. The steps included in this phase are:

- “5.1 *Create goals and objectives.*
  - 5.2 *Develop long-range financial projections.*
  - 5.3 *Write the strategic plan.*
  - 5.4 *Adopt the strategic plan”*
- (Allison and Kaye, 2005, p. 23).

*Develop long-range financial projections.* UG has a funding plan and goals for the first two years of the plan. Making projections past the first two years will be difficult especially given that they currently don't have any funding. The economy adds another level of concern since funding is very sparse and there is additional competition for what is available with other organizations experience decreased government funding and/or donations for their programs.

*Write the strategic plan.* Once the meeting was wrapped up, I determined that the agenda and meeting goals were met on time. I advised the group that the next steps in the process were for me to send out the draft plan for their review within a week. I would



then need their comments back within the next week, and would then publish the most current version of the plan with this thesis document in order to meet their deadlines, and the deadlines of my project. I confirmed with the ED that he would coordinate the group's changes in the document I sent out, and that I would complete the final formatting.

As can be seen in the draft strategic planning document in “Appendix B – Ubuntu Green Strategic Plan 2011-2012”, and UG’s draft organizational overview, this organization had a broad focus on the green economy was heavy on advocacy, policy, and legislation, accompanied by many program goals, including jobs, community gardens, and art projects. Moving through the strategic planning process and building on each element (i.e., vision, mission, and SWOT) provided the foundation, as intended, for the group to understand where they stood in the environment, and create a realistic picture of what UG can accomplish over a discrete timeline.

*Adopt the strategic plan.* The draft was sent out for review within three days of the meeting. I shared with them I would need their feedback within the next week in order to make changes and get final document approval prior to this project’s deadline. As of this writing, I have their final approval on the strategic planning document in “Appendix B. Ubuntu Green Strategic Plan 2011-2012”. Approval of the final document came from the ED and included all changes as recommended by the board members.

#### PHASE SIX & SEVEN – IMPLEMENT THE PLAN, AND EVALUATE & MONITOR THE PLAN

Phases six (Implement the Plan) and seven (Evaluate and Monitor the Plan), are discussed in the recommendations section of Chapter Five as they are out of the project scope – deliver a strategic plan for UG.

In the next chapter I discuss my findings and conclusions on this process of developing a strategic plan for UG. Included in this chapter are my observations of the group, their dynamics, how well the process worked versus what I projected, and finally, my recommendations for future strategic planning efforts.

## Chapter 5

### STRATEGIC PLAN – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To begin this project I sought available academic and practitioner literature on strategic planning and nonprofits. I found that the majority of the strategic planning literature focused on the for-profit sector with a relatively smaller body of academic literature on the nonprofit section. There was enough applicable literature on nonprofits and strategic planning to ascertain the techniques and tools smaller nonprofits used in the strategic planning process. For the purposes of this project, I chose to use the framework from the literature review by Allison and Kaye (2005), “Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations – A Practical Guide and Workbook”.

My project included completing steps one through five (i.e., “Get Ready” through “Write the Plan”). I added a pre-meeting survey to accelerate the planning process and meet the organization and project deadlines. UG may or may not choose to implement the remaining steps (i.e., “Implement the Plan”, or “Evaluate and Monitor the Plan”). As the facilitator of the process, I had limited experience with strategic planning and facilitating a group with this type of experience. Accordingly, the Allison and Kay work was an excellent choice for me with its worksheets to guide the process, as well as its facilitation advice for the process.

## FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout this project I had the opportunity to learn more about UG, the strategic planning process, and my skills as a relatively inexperienced facilitator. UG is a very new organization that was completing its founding work even as this strategic planning effort was underway. This strategic planning project, like most projects, was not a “paint by numbers” process and there was a good deal of back a forth between steps. Additionally, with all projects there are people involved that are likely learning about the topic (i.e., strategic planning), the process of moving through data to conclusions, and about their organization. Finally, based on my skills and experience there are several things that I would do, and recommend to be done, differently.

Experiencing the process of planning for an organization about people, run by people, I was reminded that collaboration and planning are slow, organic processes and need to be approached with respect, resources, patience, and time. In the meeting I found the participants to be open minded, collaborative, supportive of each other and the process, and ready to go to work. Their interactions, questions and answers reminded me that we were all in the process of learning. This learning (i.e., about themselves, the process, and in this case the organization) takes time, patience and respect. Especially with a new organization there were many questions that were not answered before the meeting, but rather in the meeting. Additionally some participants caught on to the questions or answers before others. This provided the opportunity for group members to demonstrate their interest and passion about the organization by questioning the topic at

hand and ensuring there was honesty and accountability in the organization; or coaching a group member on a definition or meaning. I observed the group's synergy and the positive effect of having the team together in the same room approaching the organization and its future.

Early on in the planning portion of the process I decided to administer a survey to expedite the data collection phase of the strategic planning process. The limited responses to the survey (i.e., five respondents of twenty-four potential participants) initially lead me to believe that the respondents might not be as committed as the ED had indicated. I assumed that these voluntary participants did not have an incentive to put survey responses and meetings as their first priority, and therefore would not have the energy to get through the process. I note it is likely that these individuals, as full-time professionals and volunteers, have limited time to complete extra activities. In the meeting I was surprised and relieved to find them energetic and collaborative about the process.

Based on my observations in the strategic planning meeting, and my new understanding of their "culture", I would suggest that sending out an electronic survey to this group was not the right way to collect their organizational data. Based on the amount of time spent putting together and administering the survey; it would have been equally expeditious for the process to do face-to-face meetings with a few key people. The added benefits of pre-meeting interviews would be developing a relationship with them and getting a sense of their individual style prior to a group interaction. This pre-meeting survey technique may not work for other groups and so I have outlined some planning

criteria for consideration in the “Recommendations for Future Strategic Planning Projects in New Nonprofits” section.

Other observations about UG include their view of their strengths and weaknesses, the need for their proposed programs and their fundraising strategy. During the meeting where their strengths and weaknesses were discussed, there was not a lot of energy put into identifying weaknesses, and those that were “disclosed” were put in the best light. In one case during the discussion, the fact that the organization was so broadly focused (i.e., lacked a specific program focus on green principles) was turned into a strength such they would be able to apply for many different types of funding. It seems that more research would need to be done on the environment they are planning to operate in to prove not only the communities need for the program, but to also validate that a broad focus as a strength for fundraising for a very diverse program set. Finally, there was little discussion about the fund raising strategy. While the creation of a fundraising plan is out of scope for this project, fundraising is going to be critical to this organization’s success. Being that this was identified as a weakness, I feel we should have dedicated more time to the topic and how the fundraising plan would be included in the strategic plan.

As for myself, I would have liked to have additional experience with a mentor that has done strategic planning so that I could become more familiar with techniques and make the process more fluid. For example, there were a few instances in the mission, vision and values review where it would have been helpful to know which idea was the

most important so we could tackle it first. It seems to me now that the mission statement would be the most important, and some technical assistance at that stage could have helped me facilitate the discussion in that direction.

Based on these observations I would do a number of things differently including planning, timing and data collection practices for future strategic planning processes. Completing the strategic planning process at an accelerated pace accentuates any resource challenges that exist, especially for data collection. For the next planning cycle after the implementation of the programs, UG will have to devise and implement a data collection methodology. If organization members plan to do another accelerated planning process, they will need significantly more resources not only to collect this data, but to analyze it as well. They should also be collecting data on the other organizations in their community, especially if there is competition for funding. Additional resources to collect, summarize and analyze the data would provide better quality information to the entire process.

Ultimately the process I implemented did not follow the Allison and Kaye process by the numbers. I found some steps to be overly detailed for what UG could accommodate with limited resources and time. Some of the more awkward portions of the process were at the beginning. In the case of UG, the ED was creating the organization even as we began the strategic planning process. It would have been helpful to begin the process after the board had been fully formed such that the ED had more time to focus on the strategic planning. Additionally, more of the fundamental

administrative work might have been complete, and the Allison and Kaye process more meaningful. It seemed that we were flushing out quite a bit of the organizational priorities for the first time in the meeting. It also became awkward fitting portions of Phase 1 (i.e., “Get Ready” – question on the planning horizon) in the survey with portions of Phase 2 (i.e., survey questions on mission, vision, values) and Phase 3 (i.e., survey questions for the SWOT analysis). Since these phases were surveyed up front, and then reviewed and discussed in the strategic planning meeting, it could be said these steps were visited in a circular, not a linear fashion. My alternative to a pre-meeting survey would be interviews that would approach this information in a similar non-linear fashion. It seems that the Allison and Kaye method would require multiple meetings to build on their steps and go through the process, thus eliminating the possibility of an extremely shortened process. More experience in strategic planning, and implementing this model could resolve these awkward areas.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROJECTS IN NEW NONPROFITS

The planning process was completed along side the creation of the organization, over a four-month period. As a relatively inexperienced strategic planning practitioner, I had the opportunity to learn many things about my skills, the organization and the process. In this section, I will specifically address recommendations for improvements of this process that are applicable to other practitioners, or nonprofit organizations with limited experience who wish to undertake this type of effort. My recommendations



include improvements such as identifying the organizational culture and ideals early on, and enhancing planning, including an annual cycle.

Based on my experience with UG, I would have done a few planning and execution items differently including working to get more resources to collect additional organizational information. Several pieces of the research describe in cautionary tones the difference between nonprofits and for-profits. That said these sources also note that not all nonprofits are alike. I would add that each member of the nonprofit leadership is not the same. In the case of UG, its founder was about the median age in the group with more time and passion for the project. Since I worked with him primarily before the first and only strategic planning meeting, I inferred that the group he recruited would be more like him. In fact, they were quite diverse, not only in their experience, as I observed on the conference calls, but also in their comfort with technology, their communication styles and available time to work on the project. Ideally I would have had the opportunity to meet the group prior to starting the process to ascertain who they were in order create a process that would fit better with the organization. The recommended alternative to pre-meeting survey would be interviews with a select group of people. This modification (i.e., from survey to interview) could open the door to developing relationships with the members, getting a sense of their individual style prior to a group interaction, as well as the possibility of cultivating leaders to head up subcommittees on the project. The information collected in these interviews would presumably provide enough information on the organization to set up the planning process.

These interviews could fill many potential gaps in organizational information, such as exploring the cultural roles played in the group (i.e., leader, founder, information expert, or program guru) and the ideals of the organization (i.e., the “sacred cow”). Understanding the organizational roles (i.e., what people do and know beyond their job titles) would give the facilitator information about who the organizational “leaders” are, and where they get their information. Having this kind of knowledge about the players could help the facilitator get the right team together to discuss the tougher issues. Specifically, discussions about money (i.e., fundraising) can be especially difficult. Identifying the people who are the finance people (with or without the title) could help ensure that expert is on the finance and fundraising subcommittee. Further getting the program person (or the organizational leader) on the same finance committee so they are learning about the issues and speaking the same language would be extremely beneficially to understanding and communicating the organizational situation. Having a better understanding of the financial goals, and realities for an organization would be a necessity for an organization operating in economy such as we see today. Furthermore, being able to communicate these realities to staff and potential funders will build these essential relationships on trust.

Understanding the ideals of the group would help understand how realistic program priorities are, in addition to uncovering any “sacred cows”. A “sacred cow” could be a person, program, or process that is generally accepted as “fact” and otherwise untouchable. Any of these could be weaknesses for the organization. By exploring the

ideals of the group, and analyzing the research on stakeholders and competition to the organization, the facilitator would have information to present to the group for discussion. Again, pointing out a gap, or weakness in an organization is not easy, however having an understanding of where the person/program/process is in the grand scheme of the organization, the facilitator can ask probing questions, backed up with facts regarding the reality of the situation. It would also be advisable, depending on the gap or weakness, to advise the senior team members of the situation in a separate meeting or subcommittee, such that they are aware and can make realistic decisions outside of the group process.

This additional information on the organization, its culture and ideals would provide better information in order to create a process that best fit the organization. As a result better planning of “the plan” would include an initial “kick-off” meeting (i.e., to set expectations and get commitment), and extended plan schedule (when possible), and the creation of subcommittees to complete specific portions of the planning work. In the case of UG, all planning areas were restricted: Scope, resources and schedule. There truly was little if any wiggle room if a piece of the project didn’t go well or if additional work (i.e., increased scope in the form of research) needed to be completed. Based on the amount of work that needed to be accomplished on a new organization, I would say this type of project should take a minimum of six months (i.e., two months longer than the four used to complete the UG project), to compensate for the lack of resources. A longer time frame would have allowed for the same resources to complete more research (i.e.,

external stakeholders and “competing” organizations), as well as having the time to complete the up front interviews and additional meetings (i.e., a kick-off meeting). Due to expedited planning timeframe and resources constraints, research on external stakeholders and “competitors” was not done. In some cases there may be a program that already exists, that on one hand, but is perhaps not perfect and any similar program put together by UG may suffer from the other’s poor reputation; and on the other hand, the program might be very successful and capture resources and attention from UG. Future strategic plan efforts would benefit from additional resources provided by grant awards that would allow research assistance, and possibly a retreat to focus the groups’ attention on the creation of a new or updated plan.

An additional challenge to the project was stopping the strategic planning process with just a plan. Given the effort put into the planning process, the next step after adopting the plan would be implementing the plan. I feel for an organization to truly be strategic, organizational members need to look at the overall organizational cycle so they can continue to build, or revise their plan if necessary. For a new nonprofit this should be a serious consideration. For a more mature organization, I would expect them to have a “strategic calendar”, or an annual planning cycle as seen below in Table 6. *Recommended Annual Planning Cycle*. This cycle is based on assumed peak periods of work they would likely encounter once they implemented their plan: Planning “season” (i.e., January through March), program “season” (i.e., April through September), and measurement and fund application “season” (i.e., October to the end of the year). Utilizing a cycle such as

this would give the organization an administrative planning cycle in order to get measurements and reports out on programs to funders that require this information, and have this information on hand for the next funding cycle.

Table 6. *Recommended Annual Planning Cycle*

First Quarter – Planning (January - March) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize annual funding plan</li> <li>• Complete measurements of prior year goals and successes.</li> <li>• Update administrative processes.</li> </ul>	Second Quarter – Programs (April - June) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for funding.</li> <li>• Volunteer recruitment.</li> <li>• Program beginning.</li> </ul>
Third Quarter – Programs (July - September) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program implementation growth.</li> <li>• Peek legislative season.</li> </ul>	Fourth Quarter – Measurement & Funding (October - December) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program reductions.</li> <li>• Program measurement.</li> <li>• Annual planning retreat.</li> <li>• Reporting on program success/needs.</li> </ul>

Strategic planning is a time-tested business practice that has been successfully implemented in the nonprofit sector. Modifications to the strategic planning process are necessary to fit the organization's culture, resources and expected outcome. As I have shown, there are many different considerations to make prior to the creation of a strategic plan for a new nonprofit including timing of the plan (i.e., is the organization in a stable state), resources available for the plan (i.e., will there be participants with time to participate in the process beyond meetings and review), and expected outcome of the plan (i.e., to include implementation and measurement or just a plan). These considerations will lead the practitioner to select the process and make any necessary modifications for their project.

APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Ubuntu Green Strategic Planning Survey Questions and Summarized Responses

All survey questions have been developed using the SurveyMonkey.com tools and were set up as requiring an open-ended, comment/text box answer. Respondents received an error message when questions were missed: “Your response is appreciated in order to expedite the strategic planning process.” The exceptions to the open-ended answer format were questions 1 and 2, which were multiple-choice answer.

Survey information and consent forms were sent to 24 Ubuntu Green (UG) Advisory Council Members. This initial notice was followed by three emails asking for their participation over a four-week period. By the time the survey was closed, eight participants sent in signed letters of consent, eight fill out partial surveys, and five completed the full ten-question survey; a final response rate of 33%, with a completion rate of 21%.

#### Survey Response Themes

- Corroboration that fundraising will be difficult in the current economy; and with a new, unrecognized nonprofit.
- Confirmation of a very diverse set of organizational goals from a community garden to high-level public policy and advocacy.
- Substantiation of a very diverse group of stakeholders across a wide range of age groups in the community; along with underprivileged members of the community.

- Verification of organizational values such as integrity, service, respect and inclusiveness are in alignment with nonprofit service.
- Authentication that the over arching mission of the organization is to promote an accessible green lifestyle for the community members.

### Survey Questions - Responses

#### 1) Consent

By completing this survey, you are agreeing to participate in the research

(Multiple Choice answer) (Responses – 8).

- a. Yes – 100%
- b. No – 0%

#### 2) Validating the Organizational Vision:

What do you perceive to be the vision of the Ubuntu Green organization? In other words, what is the optimum future state? (Open-ended answer) (Responses - 7)

- “To be the leading referral agency/clearinghouse for green jobs for low to mid-income job seekers”.
- “Promoting green in every facet of life”
- “Promotion of Green Principles”
- “To ensure communities receive healthy”
- “A competent catalyst for building green, economically self-sufficient communities”



- “To promote sustainable communities through green principles
- “To achieve exactly what Ubuntu mission statements states”.

### 3) Planning Time Horizon:

What do you see as the optimum planning horizon for Ubuntu Green's first strategic plan? (Multiple Choice answer) (Responses – 7)

- Two years (2010 – 2012) – 57.17% (4 responses)
- Three years (2010 - 2013) – 28.6% (2 responses)
- Four years (2010 - 2014)
- Five years (2010 - 2015) – 14.3% (1 response)

### 4) Organizational Values:

What are the top five to seven values that you see in the Ubuntu Green organization at start up (now), and/or the values that the organization will need to foster in order to carry out its mission? (Open-ended, multiple answer)  
(Responses – 5)

- |                                      |                 |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Belief                             | • Effectiveness | • Respect                             |
| • Commitment                         | • Fairness      | • Service                             |
| • Community<br>Education             | • Inclusiveness | • Social and<br>Environmental Justice |
| • Community outreach/<br>involvement | • Integrity     | • Solid research                      |
|                                      |                 | • Stability                           |

5) Stakeholder Identification:

For current and future outreach efforts, we appreciate your initial ideas on stakeholder segments and descriptions of the groups. Please describe these segments/groups in a sentence. Demographic information, when available is helpful.

For example: Educational outreach: Young adults in the zip code 95817 between the ages of 18 and 26. (Open-ended, multiple answer) (Responses – five)

- Groups
- At risk adults 27-55
- Older workers age 55 and older with barriers to work
- Community members of all ages
- Youth 7-14 in zip code 95817
- CALworks recipients in Sacramento Area
- Dislocated workers/WIA eligible in Sacramento area
- Legislatures
- Local and state government officials
- Media
- Training: Community Colleges and apprenticeships/internships at local businesses

- Pre-school, K-12 recycling education.

Ubuntu Green SWOT Analysis: For the purposes of a SWOT analysis for the organization, please answer the next four questions in the context of the current organization's internal strengths and weaknesses, and the current external opportunities and threats. (Open-ended, multiple answer) (Responses – five)

6) What do you see as Ubuntu Green's top strengths as the organization forms?

- Experienced professionals involved with organization
- Ability to form partnerships
- Collaborative
- Diversity
- Educated leaders
- Motivated, dedicated participants
- Strong founder
- Experienced board
- Local connection, community roots.

7) What do you see as Ubuntu Green's weakness, or challenges as the organization forms?

- Development of financial resources
- Lack of name recognition

- Lack of “brand”
  - Lack of current funding
  - Lack of funding knowledge
  - Current economy
  - Broad focus on multiple sectors in the green economy programs
  - Streamlining intake/referral process to take advantage of existing services in the area.
- 8) Where do you see the greatest opportunities for Ubuntu Green to exploit in the current environment?
- Micro business start-up in green technology
  - Linking community to new green technology and jobs
  - Ride the wave of green job development and stimulus funding
  - Creation of new jobs in recessed economy
  - Federal stimulus funding for green technologies
  - Access and connections to the local educational system
  - Green jobs and Ubuntu Green are starting at same time
- 9) Where do you see the greatest threats, or challenges, for Ubuntu Green to overcome as the organization forms in the current environment?

- Establishing relationships with other existing institutions
- Community apathy
- Reluctance of community to embrace change
- Competition from other green organizations
- Competition for funding
- Duplication of existing community programs/services
- Lack of start-up funding available.

10) Top Goals:

Finally, what, in your opinion, are the top three to five goals that Ubuntu Green should be focusing on over the time horizon you stated in question (2)? (Open-ended, multiple answer) (Responses – 5)

- Strategic Planning/Mission Statement
- Fundraising
- Research
- Outreach to potential partners with needs assessment
- Getting funding for grassroots programs
- Working with communities that need immediate assistance
- Creating partnerships in program operations, visibility/recognition, political support

- Educating the community on green principles
- Increase organizational awareness and visibility in the community
- Strengthening the organization (i.e., funding)
- Capacity building
- Media exposure
- Determining what has Ubuntu Green achieved
- How to measure what Ubuntu Green has or will achieve
- Getting the green message out to young people (impacting current and future generations).

Table 7. *Ubuntu Green SWOT Survey Results (not ranked or ordered)*

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced professionals involved with organization</li> <li>• Ability to form partnerships</li> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Educated leaders</li> <li>• Motivated, dedicated participants</li> <li>• Strong founder</li> <li>• Experienced board</li> <li>• Local connection, community roots.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of financial resources</li> <li>• Lack of name recognition</li> <li>• Lack of “brand”</li> <li>• Lack of current funding</li> <li>• Lack of funding knowledge</li> <li>• Current economy</li> <li>• Broad focus on multiple sectors in the green economy programs</li> <li>• Streamlining intake/referral process to take advantage of existing services in the area.</li> </ul>
Opportunity	Threat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micro business start-up in green technology</li> <li>• Linking community to new green technology and jobs</li> <li>• Ride the wave of green job development and stimulus</li> <li>• Creation of new jobs in recessed economy</li> <li>• Federal stimulus funding for green technologies</li> <li>• Access and connections to the local educational system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing relationships with other existing institutions</li> <li>• Community apathy</li> <li>• Reluctance of community to embrace change</li> <li>• Competition from other green organizations</li> <li>• Competition for funding</li> <li>• Duplication of existing community programs/services</li> <li>• Lack of start-up funding available.</li> </ul>

APPENDIX B

Ubuntu Green - Strategic Plan for 2010 – 2011

Ubuntu Green

2010 – 2011 Strategic Plan

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*Where Sustainable, Equitable Communities Unite!*

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Ubuntu Green  
2614 - 36<sup>th</sup> Street  
Sacramento, CA 95816  
(916) 669-0671  
info@ubuntugreen.org  
www.ubuntugreen.org

*Ubuntu Green is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.*

Strategic Plan presented to Ubuntu Green Board, Advisory Council and Staff November 1, 2009.



VISION – A community leader promoting green principles, through partnerships, to increase public health, cleaner and safer environments, improved access to healthy food, and greater economic stability to underserved communities.

MISSION – Ubuntu Green, as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is committed to promoting the green movement in underserved communities through advocacy, employment, education, and economic development.

UBUNTU – The ethic or humanist philosophy emphasizing community, sharing and generosity.

The concept of Ubuntu is used in the political sphere to emphasize the need for unity or consensus in decision-making, as well as the need for a suitably humanitarian ethic to inform those decisions

The word has its origin in the Bantu languages of Southern African and as a traditional African concept.

#### WHO WE ARE

Ubuntu Green (UG) is a community-based 501(c)(3), nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable, equitable communities through the promotion of green principles, development, jobs and culture.

Our community based programs work to provide information, education, access and training to underserved, and challenged communities in order for them learn, live and work in a more equitable, sustainable way.

UG was founded in 2009 by an all volunteer staff dedicated to establishing a resource for the community to learn more about green living, at home and at work. UG is unique from other local nonprofit organizations in that our focus is promoting green philosophies, education, and training in the underserved communities of Sacramento.

Promoting and advocating for green ideas and methods in these neighborhoods will develop synergies that can reinforce positive lifestyle changes in the community and beyond.

UG sees the need in these neighborhoods where environmental justice issues are more prevalent than in non low-income neighborhoods.

WHO WE SERVE

UG is a community-based organization focusing on the needs of underserved communities in Sacramento. In this start up period, our core outreach programs will primarily focus on reaching out to the community at large as a resource for job training programs, sustainable gardening and greater access to healthy food, and improvements to the built environment

The next phase will include more focused outreach to development to school age children in Oak Park, including how green and healthy principles, including community gardening, healthy food options, and physical activity can become a part of their green lifestyle.

Future programs will include outreach to potential youth and adult workers that are searching for our Green Jobs program. This program will focus on individuals age 16-25 seeking to enter the work force; as well as older workers fifty-five and older who are in need of job retraining.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Promote green philosophy, education, training and leadership development to the underserved communities of Sacramento.
- Increase the community’s access to nutritional information and improve food access to enable healthy eating habits.

Promote green principles and methods to improve local environments so they are cleaner and safer for residents.

- Improve the greater economic stability of underserved communities through training, educational and increased job opportunities and economic development.
- Work with other established community organizations to leverage funding and experience and increase UG’s reach and effectiveness.
- Build a nonprofit organization that is well funded, sustainable, inclusive and effective.

*UG Outreach and Events – 2009*

UG supports and promotes green community activities through community gardens, community arts programs and public health and education outreach.

UG’s first outreach project was the First Annual Green Oak Park event in September 2009. On September 11, 2009, UG hosted the first annual Green Oak Park! event.

This annual event brought together community members to promote and learn about green lifestyles including energy efficiency; green jobs; sustainable, organic food; as well as community gardens and farm stands.

UG plans on hosting this even again in September 10, 2010, and each year thereafter.

*Ubuntu Green - Green Community Program*

UG is in the process of developing its Community Garden Project to promote the development of community gardens in urban communities. The project will be designed based on micro-business practices in partnership with youth and seniors, to promote healthy lifestyles and sustainability.

UG will work with community organizations and members to secure property and build a local, all-volunteer community garden. Efforts are currently under way to identify funding and property to begin this important community project for educating residents about the nutritional, community and economic benefits of a local garden.

Future partnership opportunities have been identified in UG influences policies that aim to do the following for low-income communities and communities of color:

- Support alternative transportation, smart growth, environmental justice, brownfields redevelopment, public health, sustainable development and transit oriented development.
- Improve healthy food access.
- Promote green jobs, technology and infrastructure.

The UG, Green Arts Projects will promote art as a way to greening the community. The program will support

artists using recycled and reusable materials and promote joint collaborations with UG and urban artists.

*Ubuntu Green – Advocacy*

UG continues to actively work with local, state and federal representative in areas of green policy and technologies. UG's advocacy efforts include support of green training, planning and development, jobs, and education.

UG seeks to create policy systems change at the local, regional, state and federal levels through direct advocacy, empowerment of communities, policy development and implementation, and research.

*Sustainable Nonprofit Organization*

As a start-up organization, UG recognizes the importance of developing its organizational structure, and programs, in a way that will allow sustainable growth. Given the current economy, and UG's heavy reliance on volunteers, focused fund raising and planning will be key to the long-term success of the organization.

The organizations strengths are predominantly based on the experiences and skills of the founder, advisory committee and board members. Collectively, this group has extensive experience in work development programs, government and nonprofit management, political and advocacy issues for underserved communities.

This group is very dedicated to promoting green lifestyle changes in these communities to increase the public health and improve overall economic stability.

The current weaknesses of the organization pertain to the gap in fund raising experience and start-up funding for the organization. These gaps are addressed in the fundraising plan and the organizations goal to bring a volunteer fundraiser as soon as a candidate can be identified. The long term goal is to convert this candidate to paid staff.

The primary opportunities for UG are creating a sustainable organization in a limited economic time. UG will leverage the volunteer advisory council and board experience and develop effective partnerships with other established local groups in order to deliver essential job and green community programs. By partnering with educational institutions and employers UG would be able to more effectively fill green sector jobs with newly trained community members. These work opportunities will be key to the long-term success of the underserved communities UG works in.

The current economic recession, and the increased competition for limited funding, for services that are in higher demand, is the largest threat to UG.

The tables on the following pages outline UG's SWOT analysis and annual priorities for action.

UBUNTU GREEN'S SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated, diverse, experienced leadership.</li> <li>• Experience collaborating with other organizations for mutual benefit.</li> <li>• Access and relationships with local, state and federal representatives.</li> <li>• Founded in the primary community we will serve.</li> <li>• Established relationships with faith-based, multi-ethnic/cultural, business and educational organizations.</li> <li>• Identified volunteer work force.</li> <li>• Comprehensive fundraising plan in place.</li> <li>• Administrative and growth framework in place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New organization.</li> <li>• Lack of hired staff.</li> <li>• Growing name recognition.</li> <li>• Lack of current funding, or dedicated fundraiser.</li> <li>• Articulating the collaborative nature of UG to all communities.</li> <li>• Newly implemented funding plan.</li> <li>• Broad focus on multiple areas of new green economy.</li> <li>• Development of administrative human resources capacity.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green economy is new and growing.</li> <li>• Starting up in recession.</li> <li>• Access to numerous green education programs coming to Sacramento community.</li> <li>• Creation of new jobs in recessed economy; underserved community.</li> <li>• Funding focus has changed to green economy; i.e., Federal Stimulus Funding, CA Endowment.</li> <li>• Broad focus on multiple areas of new green economy to take advantage of potential funding opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing relationships with existing organizations.</li> <li>• Community apathy and reluctance to embrace change.</li> <li>• Competition for funding from other nonprofit groups in the community.</li> <li>• Reduced funding available in current economy.</li> <li>• Structural weaknesses and gaps in human service sector.</li> <li>• Gap between public and private services available.</li> <li>• Duplication of past and existing community programs.</li> </ul>

## PHASE ONE: 2010 ANNUAL PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

*FIRST QUARTER*

- Recruit final board member (1) by the end of Q1.
- Continue participation in regional sustainability forums:
  - Regional Food Systems Collaborative, Sacramento Building Healthy Communities, SACOG MTP Update.
- Implement fundraising plan in Q1:
  - 2010 minimum fundraising goal of \$250,000 through grant and private donations.
- Continue monitoring local, state and federal legislation and policies for relevancy to organization.
- Have new Advisory Council in place.
- Publish and present “Best Practices in Low-Income and Communities of Color Community Gardens” research.
- Introduce legislation focusing on environmental and green justice in CA State Legislature.
- Recruit Volunteer Program Director.
- Recruit Research Assistant/Intern to develop Resource Directory/Social Networking plan.

*SECOND QUARTER*

- Administrative manual completed by end of Q2.

- Establish accounting system, reporting, and human resource policies and procedures:
- Convert President/CEO and Director of Advocacy and Communications to paid staff by the end of Q2.
- Finalize and implement marketing plan in Q2:
  - Begin implementation of “U-Green?” T’s, by identifying artist and organic t-shirt suppliers in time for unveiling and placement at Green Oak Park! 2010 event.
  - Establish weekly presence at Oak Park Farm Stand/Market.
  - Identify two additional events to participate in (Celebrate Oak Park!, etc.).
- Website and Resource Directory to strengthen community connections and support events presence by the end of Q2:
  - Complete website design.
  - Implement resource directory for green job training programs, energy efficiency programs, green development, garden information and links to other community resources.
  - Establish a social networking presence on Facebook, MySpace, and in Twitter to supplement information on website.

**PHASE ONE: 2010 ANNUAL PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (CONTINUED)**

- Establish UG Youth Leadership Team in Oak Park/South Sacramento that will work on volunteer support for Green Oak Park! 2010 and other community event and outreach work.
- Convert/Hire Director of Administration (Part-Time) (dependent on funding).

**THIRD QUARTER**

- Identify and establish office location for UG operations by the end of Q3 (dependant on funding).
- Host Second Annual Green Oak Park event in Q3:
  - Increase exhibitor turnout by 20%, and attendee turnout by 25%.
- Convert/Hire Director of Development and Program Director (part-time).
- Establish partnerships, guidelines, funding targets for Green Jobs program.

**FOURTH QUARTER (DEPENDENT ON FUNDING)**

- Identify academic partner and Research Assistant/Intern to conduct “Local Engagement” Research and prepare corresponding publication.
- Establish and implement long-term marketing and merchandising plan for “U Green?” T’s.

## PHASE TWO: 2011 ANNUAL PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (TO BE UPDATED FALL 2010)

*FIRST QUARTER*

- Continued implementation of fundraising plan in Q1:
  - 2011 minimum fundraising goal of \$300,000 through grant and private donations.
- Utilize the Advisory Council and “outreach committee” to update marketing plan and increase outreach efforts by the end of Q1 2011:
  - Expand participation at region-wide events.
  - Develop local garden center and farm partnerships for gardening demonstrations and workshops.
  - Identify and develop partnerships with local businesses and organizations to assist in the recruitment of eligible community members.
  - Identify and develop additional relationships with local agencies for joint work in job training, and community gardening projects.
- Review all administrative policies and update Administrative manual by end of Q1 2011.
- Identify UG Youth Leadership Team for 2011.

*SECOND QUARTER*

- Convert Development Director to full-time by the end of Q2 2011.
- Update and implement marketing plan in Q2:
  - Identity and establish weekly presence at one additional farmers market.

*THIRD QUARTER*

- Convert Administrative Director and Program Director to full-time by the end of Q3 2011.
- Website and Resource Directory:
  - Update website plan and design for continued resource directory updates by the end of Q3 2011.
- Host Third Annual Green Oak Park event in Q3:
  - Increase exhibitor turnout by 15% over 2010 and attendee turnout by 20% over 2010.
- Establish outreach measurement and reporting strategy by the end of Q3 2010.
- Present “Local Engagement” research and publication.

*FOURTH QUARTER*

- Hire part-time Program and Policy Coordinator.



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