What is strategic planning?

Strategic planning is the process of determining or figuring out what a group/organization intends to be in the future and how it will get there. In strategic planning we’re planning for **CHANGE**. Strategic planning involves fundamental choices about:

**Defining** the current situation

**Envisioning** the future we want

**Clarifying** key vision elements

**Identifying** priorities and opportunities and obstacles to achieving the vision

**Creating** objectives and innovative, practical activities that will lead us to the vision

**Planning** for resources needed to carry out the activities

Strategic planning is a means for **charting a course of action** and gives us a better understanding of what we are capable of doing and what we need to improve or modify in relation to our desired future state. Strategic plans are essential in **setting direction** and **focusing resources**. The plans are **not cast in stone**; they need to be reviewed at least once a year to see if the course we charted is still the one we want to follow. Strategic plans usually cover a three to five-year time period.

> If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.
> —African proverb

> Don’t measure with a micrometer what you cut with a chainsaw.
**SMART plans**

**Specific** – "Yes/No" test: "12 months from now, will we know if this project was accomplished?" If yes, how? If no, make the project more specific.

**Measurable & Meaningful** – How will the difference this project made show up and what numbers will be different? How deeply do we care about it?

**Aggressive & Attainable** – Is this a stretch for us? Can we get the people, input, resources needed?

**Relevant & Realistic** – Is this a priority? Can we take it on, given our other commitments?

**Timely** – Is now the right time in our organization’s evolution and development?

Source: Heifer International North America Program